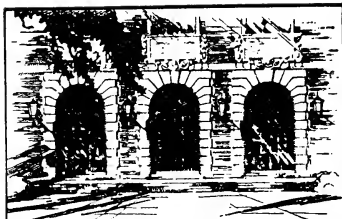




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DRAMATIC STORIES.

“ Let us know when we may cry,
‘ *Altro Volto.*’ *Anglice*, ‘ Again! again!’ ”
Spectator.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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VOL. I.

B



GODWIN AND GODA.

*A few loose leaves from the History of
England.*

It was already long past nine in the forenoon : but the herdsman Ulfnoth had not yet begun his morning meal, called afterwards by the Norman settlers *dismer* or *disner* (our *dinner*) from the fact of their discussing this important matter at ten o'clock : that nation having ever been more advanced than us in the civilization of *gourmandise*.

But the ninth hour was past, and Ulfnoth had not begun his meal : the barley *loudas*, or loaves, on the stone hearth, were baked to

almost the same consistency as the embers, among which they had been placed ; the ale, which had been punctually drawn from a large air-tight vat, had, bubble by bubble, lost the creamy cap wherewith it had crowned the deep burnt clay tankard, into which it had been emptied ; and the honey, which stood by, in a similar but smaller jar, on a three-legged round oaken block (serving as a table,) seemed by the number of flies, which were struggling through its tenacious sweets, to afford strong presumption that it also had been for a long time exposed.

The herdsman's meal was in point of fact spoiling ; rather a singular circumstance, seeing that there he was to have eaten it, if he had chosen ; nor is this circumstance the less singular from the fact that he was waiting for his son, whom he had expected home a full hour before. The father was naturally uneasy at his son's tarrying ; not so much on account of the viands spoiling, but a little because his delay was unexpected ; yet on this head he might have easily set his heart at rest, and foretold most favourably from his

son's absence; for in truth the lad had gone that morning on no greater or less an errand than to court a young girl, who with her mother lived on the borders of the neighbouring shire of Somerset, and to whom he had been long attached, but had never, further than by outward signs of attention, told of his affection; he had gone that morning, (though against the serious, and as he thought unaccountable advice of his father,) owing partly to some tales he had heard in the neighbourhood, to risk all his hopes on one hazard, and either to win an avowal of her love, or, if he could not do that, at once to give up all thoughts about her; such at least, he declared to his father, were his alternatives.

Ulfnoth, who was older than his son, and perhaps knew something more of the human heart, very likely did not believe that this latter alternative could so readily be adopted; and knowing how much his son had at stake on the issue of the present visit, might very likely have felt anxious concerning it; though surely the natural or at any rate the most plausible inference would have been that his

son's delay was caused by the success of his suit—for what would have been more likely than that an accepted suitor should choose to stay by his mistress's side and feast on the contemplation of her charms, rather than to return home punctually at meal-time, and eat warm barley loaves and honey and drink ale, even though in the company of the best of fathers? To be sure his son had faithfully promised to be back by half past eight, 'come what might;' but what is more natural than that a happy lover's memory of all temporal things,—and especially of those most temporal things called minutes—should be drowned in the flood of his overflowing joy? However natural and likely all this might be, this favourable construction on his son's delay hardly, if at all occurred to old Ulfnoth, as from time to time he kept going to the door of his low round vaulted hovel, built after the fashion of those times of alternate rows of turves and heavy stones, kept in their places by thick rough-hewn oaken timbers; or yet more often thrusting his head from one of the round eyelet holes or windows, which imme-

diately looked over the Highburn hills ; for over these he knew lay his son's path homewards.

And not much wonder that these favorable forebodings did not occur to Ulfnoth's mind ; for in fact he had almost forgotten the cause of his son's absence altogether ; or at least his recollection was, for the time, absorbed in his fear what its consequences might prove ; for he had heard, since his son's departure that morning, that a desperate fight had been fought the day before, not further off than Scearstan, about twelve miles in the shire, between the English and the Danes ; that the fight had not been ended at night-fall, and it was supposed would have been renewed that morning ; and his dread arose from the danger his son plainly would run of inadvertently falling in with some straggling bands of the marauding foe, and being made prisoner, even if nothing worse should happen to him.

Hour after hour passed away ; and with every passing hour the father's anxiety became more powerful and insupportable. From

time to time he sallied forth from his hovel, with the intention of going in search of his son; but no sooner had he got out of sight of his home, than an irresistible impulse always drew him back thither again, with the deceitful hope that his son might even in his absence have returned. The only person in his employ, whom he could have sent on the almost useless search after his son, was a young lad who was already occupied in tending the cattle in the leas; besides Ulfnoth knew not even where to find him.

Meanwhile his feelings rose to agony: mid-day came—and passed—the sixth hour after it—the hour of the evening meal drew near; and the food that had been placed on the table, nine hours before, remained still untasted and untouched—save by the flies.

Great therefore were Ulfnoth's surprise and joy, when at length, on withdrawing his head from the before-mentioned eyelet hole, he saw that his son had entered the hovel, unobserved by him; and the following dialogue at once took place between them.

Ulf. Ah! at last! I greet and welcome thee, Godwin.

Godw. I thank thee, my father.

Ulf. I gladden to see thee safe: this is well.

Godw. Is it, father?

Ulf. I trust so: hast thou fallen in with them?

Godw. Them! whom?

Ulf. The foe.

Godw. I wot of no foe: nor heed none.

Ulf. Good! then now tell me how thou hast sped in the wooing, that I could not rede thee from: I should fear indeed by thy brow, not——

Godw. Father, fear nothing. Ask nothing, father, I beg thee. What boots it asking, when the answer is foreknown? What boots it fearing, when the *worst* is known?

And Godwin flung himself impatiently on a wooden bench by the fire-side and hid his face in his hands, his elbows resting on his knees; and his breast began heaving, as though he were sobbing violently.

The father came near to his son. He stood

a minute gazing on him, till the tears stood in his own eyes, and then bending over him, that his own silver-white beard mingled with the auburn clusters of his son's hair, he laid his hand softly on his shoulder, and said:

Weep not, Godwin.

Godw. I weep not, father.

At these words Godwin, with a start, turned his face up towards his father and showed that his eyes though blood-shot and swollen, were indeed unwet by tears.

Ulfñ. Be calm then, Godwin.

Godw. I cannot: that can I not. Ulfnoth, my father, how can thy son be calm?

And he rose hastily from his seat, and began quickly pacing up and down the narrow area of their dwelling: after a minute or two thus pacing, he stopped before his father and addressed him in a mild tone:

Spake I not harshly to thee, my father? forgive me.

Ulfñ. Thou spakest not harshly to thine old father, Godwin; never didst thou that; or hadst thou done so now, how could I choose but forgive thee—and thou in grief?

Godw. Bless thee, my father; God and Our Lady bless thee for that word.

The father and son embraced; and the latter after unloading his heart of its burthen of tears, shed on his parent's bosom, retook his seat, and began again to speak.

Godw. I begged thee even now, my father, to ask nothing of me—but methinks it were better I should tell thee all; and thou wilt not scorn me, father, that I feel my wound so keenly; even though the pain make me thus womanish; thou wilt not scorn thy son, as yon haughty woman has scorned him—aye—scorn was the true word she spake—Aelfgiva the daughter of the sons of Hengist would *scorn* to wive with the son of a neatherd!

Ulfñ. Were those her words?

Godw. Those were her words, father, those were her own living words: thinkest thou I can ever forget them? that one hissing—stinging word of *scorn*: thinkest thou I can ever forget *that*?

Ulfñ. Then she should have meant, that if she knew thee other than as a neatherd's son, she might have wived thee?

Godw. Might ! no, by my manhood and Christendom—but that might she not—lovely unchristened witch as she is,—for so men say she is,—and so whether she be or be not, reck I nought,—but *that* never might she now. No, father ;—this morning at cock-crow had Godwin been an Earldorman of the land, and Aelfgiva but the lowly maiden she seems to be, I would have gladly laid my wealth, my hopes, my heart, at that maiden's feet—but she *scorns* me as I am—and now were I other than a neatherd's son—and she—aye even did *she* woo *me* for my love—by God, I would pay her back her scorn in full and over.

Ulf. It is well,—dear son, believe me it is well; and perhaps I could not find a fitter time to tell thee, what long ere now.....

Godw. Nay, father, father, tell me nothing now, father; save it may be how I may forget this—what name may I call her by—and not wrong her, or rather not do her too much worship? and for whom has she scorned thy son ! father? For some fair-skinned Dane, I wis; for so the tale runs, father, does it

not? So of her as of so many of our English mothers and daughters—foul befall the day that first these strangers landed on our shores! how many an English woman's eye have they not taken with their smug-washed faces? how many a heart have they not entangled with their clean-kempt curls! God's wounds! but it is enough to make a man swear back his oath from King or Bishop.

Ulf. Godwin, thy words are hot and hasty.

Godw. It is easy for thee, Ulfnoth, to find them so; whose heart has chilled for such thoughts as mine, and is slow to feel with them.

Ulf. My son not long since blamed himself for speaking harshly to his father.

Godw. Father, dear father, I forgot: forgot both myself and my own words; and now sue for forgiveness.

He knelt down on one knee before his father, who raised him, blessed him, and kissed him on the forehead.

Ulf. Speak we no more of it, my dearly loved son.

Godw. No, dearest father; no more at all of

this: it does no good. I will forget her, father. Wa la! wa la! Aelfgiva! that I should ever join those words of thee.

And again the rejected suitor gave way to the flood of his grief. After a few minutes he turned suddenly to his father again:

Godw. Thou askedest me, father, when I came in, about the foe; what knowest thou of them? there must be great need of fighting-men now.

Ulfñ. I will tell thee, son, what I have heard; but first let us eat.

Godw. Nay, father, I have no heart to eat.

Ulfñ. What, boy, for that our loudas are somewhat over-brenned, and our ale may be flat? is it shame that thy tarrying hath marred them that lets thee from eating? let not that irk thee; we will have fresh.

Godw. Jest not with me, father; I am unhappy.

Ulfñ. But the mirth of a friend may season sorrow: so saith the saw. Nevertheless I will not jest, an thou will not, my son. But come thou and eat with thy father, Godwin.

Godw. Indeed and truth, father, I cannot.

Ulf. Not at my begging, my son?

Godw. I will:—I will try, my father.

They sat down to the table together; and Godwin kept his word: he tried to eat; but without much success, and it must be owned that herein his father, pressing as he had been, sat his son a very bad example, for he did not swallow many mouthfuls himself.

At Godwin's repeated questions about the foe, Ulfnoth told him all he had heard of the fight of the foregoing day at Searstan; and among other things, that the kings of the adverse armies were said to have fought hand to hand; that the well-tried traitor Eadric, and Edmond's darling, Aelmaer had fought in the ranks of the Danes against their lord; and that the slaughter had been great and fearful. But all these and such-like tidings were flowing into unheeded ears, for in the middle of one of his father's most pathetic lamentations over the state of their bleeding country, Godwin started up and said he should go to bed.

His father started too at this intimation which was unpolite,—to say the least of it.

Ulfñ. My son, it is early; but thou art surely weary with over-walking.

Godw. Aye, father, I am somewhat.

Ulfñ. Thou must needs be; for thou must have been far round this day, my son; thou camest not straight from. . . . I would say thou camest not over the Highburn hills, Godwin.

Godw. No, my father; I walked some way round—for I thought—I felt the air would do me good.

In fact after he had left Aelfgiva's cottage the young Saxon had run, rather than walked, a circuit of not far short of thirty miles, before he came back to his home; which considering the risk he incurred of keeping his father waiting for his two meals was decidedly wrong.

They parted for the night, therefore—the father and son;—and the latter, without his wonted prayers, betook himself at once to his straw pallet.

CHAPTER II.

BUT Godwin had no rest till after midnight ; then he sank into a sound and deep sleep, from which an hour before sunrise he awoke, with the feeling of having dreamed a fearful dream, though no circumstance of it could he remember.

He straightway rose, again omitting his prayers, and on his way to the door of the hovel, passed into the room where he had left his father the preceding night. He found him there : whether he had risen before him, or had indeed not at all retired to rest, Godwin knew not.

The usual morning greetings passed not between them, for the son was silent from

wonder, and may be some annoyance at seeing his father so unexpectedly. Ulfnoth at once addressed him thus ;—

“This was even as I feared, Godwin.”

Godw. How ? what fearedst thou, father ?

Ulfn. That thou shouldst thus early leave our home, Godwin.

Godw. And why should I not, father ?

Ulfn. For what avail shouldst thou, son ? Aelsig will out with the herds as he went yesterday.

Godw. Nay, but Aelsig had better tarry with thee ; I will go with the herds, as is my duty.

Ulfn. There is no need, Godwin, and I had liefer far thou shouldst tarry with me ; the herds.....

Godw. Oh ! dear father, it was not so much for them I thought—I am thinking—more mayhap than I ought—about myself just now ; and in sooth I feel I shall be better soon, for I am not well, father. I have slept heavily, but not with refreshment, and my head pains me ; I shall be better in the open air ; the weather is so still, and the midsummer morning so mild

and lovely, that mayhap it may make me mild, father ; I would wish to go.

*Ulf*n. But my great fear is, dear son, lest thou shouldst fall in with some of these harrying Danes.

Godw. No fear of that, father ; I will go no further than the Shimmer-stone ; only the devil-guild could find me there ; and I would give even them a kindred welcome.

*Ulf*n. Hush, my darling son.

Godw. Ave Maria ! Pater noster ! Amen ! (and not even a mental addition was made to this formula ; the peasantry of those times being too ill-taught or careless to master much of a language, not a syllable of which they understood.) My words are wild this morning, father ; nor wonder : but fear not for me, I shall not be harmed. Being alone for some while will bring me to myself. (The old man was taking up a staff,—which he now laid down again. Godwin marked both these actions). Fare thee well, my loved father, till meal-tide bless me.

*Ulf*n. I do, my son ; I, in the name of our

common Father bless thee : may he be with thee, and ward thee.

With the aid of young Aelsig, the herd, to the number of half a score head, were now turned out of their stalls ; and after an embrace from his father, Godwin departed from the hovel. Ulfnoth stood watching his son till both he and his horned charge (having seemed, as seen through the thick morning mist, to dilate into gigantic and grotesque forms) at last flickered away from his sight ; he then turned, first into his hovel, and then into his bed.

For some minutes Godwin ascended a hill from the brow of which, though he now stood above the mist, nothing was discernible but what seemed a vast, and calm, and shoreless sea, with here and there an island peak (the tops of other hills) rising from its waters ; he then turned sharply to his left, and by a much more steep descent plunging into the mist, he gained a long narrow strip of meadow-valley below. This was skirted on his right, as he walked along it, by the hill he had just crossed ; on his left by a spinney, or copse, of

ash trees. Neither of these boundaries indeed were now visible to Godwin; but he knew their direction and distance from him well, and every inch of the ground he was treading. Towards the valley's further end, which he now approached, the hills suddenly changed their character to that of steep and, in parts, rocky cliffs—the copse to the left, gradually assuming a more woodlike appearance, after widening out into a crescent, shut in and closed with them. Godwin, wearied beyond measure of the slow pace at which he had of necessity followed the cattle, and which was so thoroughly uncongenial to his then state of mind—and strangely put out of humour by the rapid clearing up of the weather, left the beasts to shift for themselves, and darted at full speed through an opening in the spinney—rushing on a few yards, heedless of the boughs or underwood that came across his path, dashing them aside, or crushing them down with an almost unnatural energy, as though he were a man flying from death, or on towards some object on the gaining of which more than his life depended, and which without the utmost haste he should

surely and irrecoverably lose. His career was like that of a wounded beast, who strives to overcome his sense of pain by the triumphant bearing down of all obstacles that come athwart him, and rather seeks than shuns them. In this way the young Saxon rushed on, nor stopped till he soon arrived at the goal of his course and stood in front of the Shimmerstone.

It was a lovely spot, and one which a *happy* man might well have chosen as a fit retreat wherein "to sigh away a summer's afternoon;" but though it possessed this loveliness, so much in accordance with a calm state of blissful feeling, it wanted that grandeur and sublimity which can overawe and subdue the turbulent emotions of the mind, and make man, even in his proudest or most thoughtless moments, own that he is not quite the absolute lord of this material world; therefore this spot, which was simply lovely, was not the best suited for Godwin in his present mood. It consisted of a small, nearly circular, area, of about twenty feet diameter, carpetted with that peculiarly thick and diminutive grass, the appearance of

which a well-mown lawn is meant to imitate ; around this velvet flooring was literally a fringe of daisies, for very few were to be seen within the border ; beyond them rose, for three parts of the circumference, an amphitheatre of taller wild flowers, among which the white, purple and yellow fox-glove were yet conspicuous,—of underwood, such as the golden and the silver broom, and of trees mostly ash, a continuation of the adjoining copse ; the fourth part of this supposed circle was cut off by lofty rocks, the principal of which was that from which the place derived its title—the Shimmerstone. This was a broad smooth grey rock rising nearly fifteen feet from the surface of the soil ; at the top of it was a large natural pool or cistern of the clearest spring water, overflowing the horizontal edge towards the area ; and thus a thin sheet of water was constantly sliding down the face of the rock, which, though it has been called smooth, (for so it looked to the eye) was yet sufficiently broken to slightly ripple the water in its descent, so that when the rays of the sun, or more particularly of the moon, were thrown on it the

effect produced was most beautiful, though hardly to be explained in words; it may perhaps be described as if the stone were quivering and sparkling, and it was this effect that the Saxon peasants had intended to typify in the name they had bestowed on the stone. The water, which was so continually falling, did not however form either pool or brook at the foot of the rock, but there disappeared among some overhanging shrubs that grew around. Upon nearer inspection it was seen that in fact the rock did not rise, as it seemed to do, immediately from the soil, but between it and the grass area there was a fissure of trifling breadth, but apparently of considerable depth, down which the water was heard, and under some lights was even seen to gush in search probably of some new outlet. Another feature which added to the singularity of the Shimmer-stone, was the contrast which its smooth face afforded to the shaggy and fantastic masses of rock by which it was flanked on either side.

Such a spot at such a period could not be without its legend, and that of the Shimmer-

stone was simple enough and apparently of British extraction. According to it, the account generally received as authentic, that Giants were the aboriginal inhabitants of this island, is a mistatement; for the race of Fairies had lived and left here long before their huge successors were born or thought of. The legend runs that one of these fair beings, whose name has not reached posterity, so far forgot her high and ethereal nature as to fall mortally in love with a young and handsome adventurer from far-off lands—perhaps a tin-merchant from Phœnicia—or an oyster-dredger from Etruria—that, like all her sex, whether Fairies or women, she easily succeeded in turning the young man's head and seducing him from his lawful pursuits; that they lived together though illicitly, yet happily for a year, and had a daughter; that soon afterwards the affair came to the ears of the Queen of the Fairies, who, like Diana or Queen Elizabeth, was always outrageous if any of her attendants made a false step in the ways of modesty—that she visited the naughty pair—read them an awful lecture on morality and virtue—sent the young man

about his business again, and gave the trembling mother the option of two things, namely, whether she herself or her infant should be at once deprived of being. The Fairy without hesitation chose the dreadful lot for herself, and only ventured to recommend her babe to her sovereign's care. The Queen was touched, but her word was passed—she promised however to befriend the infant, and gave the fairy the choice of what form she would assume, and the assurance that, as soon as she did assume it, her own immortality should be transformed to her child. The Fairy, overwhelmed with this nobleness, and something softened by her own loss of life and a lover, became, “like Niobe all tears,” and dissolved into the pool at the top of the Shimmer-stone; the child became a Fairy; and the Queen, before leaving the spot, added, as a further proof of her generosity, as also of her fallibility, that the daughter should some day dry the mother's tears and restore her to being: which foreboding has perhaps been fulfilled, as the Shimmer-stone has been dry for some centuries.

To return to our tale. The spot, which has led to this digression, did not at the time

we are now introduced to it, enjoy the most favourable character ; for, by the beginning of the eleventh century Fairies had fallen into considerable disrepute, and were held to be much more prone to malice and mischief, than to goodwill and love towards the sons of men ; and the Shimmer-stone was said to be haunted—not only by fairies (as well it might if the foregoing tale were true)—but by sundry more awful and powerful visitants, the avowed and inveterate foes of man ; although the circumstance of so fair and tranquil a scene being allotted to such foul and stormy spirits can hardly be accounted for, unless by the fact that one superstition generally dovetails with a former one, and that the beliefs and fears of the untaught vulgar, though taking perhaps a new shape, have generally adhered to the old localities and rites of their forefathers.

Both Godwin and his father were aware of the evil report in which the Shimmer-stone was held, but neither of them seemingly gave much credit thereto, for with the former it was a favourite haunt ; and it may be remembered that when in the previously recorded conversa-

tion he proposed on the present occasion to visit it, his proposal drew no expression of warning or surprise from his father, who merely reproved his son for the wanton levity of his words on what was at any rate a serious matter. But though young Godwin did not much believe that the Shimmer-stone was haunted by evil spirits, yet it might well be that, in his present state of mind, vaguely recollecting the tales he had heard concerning it, he intuitively formed the intention of going there, as it were in very bravery and daring of dangers, the general existence of which formed part of his creed. He stood accordingly before the Shimmer-stone—but *stood* not long—for the restlessness of his mind was too great to allow his body to rest—he *staid* however on the spot for some time,—now flinging himself on the cold wet earth and pouring out his agony alternately in prayers to the saints, or in imprecations to the devils;—now pacing up and down, quickly and furiously,—until the smooth turf became actually broken and miry with his wearing footsteps;—and anon standing for a second or two, still as the rocks around him,

with folded arms, and clenched hands and lips and teeth, until his fury again burst forth and drove him into motion. His thoughts were various and rapid, but all whirling indistinctly round one central point, like the spokes round the nave of a chariot wheel at its fullest speed; that centre thought of all was his wounded vanity; and as a cure for this, the strangest and wildest fancies darted through his brain; one as flitting as the rest, but which he tried most to grasp, was the notion which he had unknowingly hinted at, during the conversation with his father on the foregoing evening—that he would join the English army and fight against the Danes;—for against those oppressors of his country,—now that he had received, as he thought, a personal injury from one of them,—he had conceived the most exterminating hatred. Such is patriotism. Such was that of Hampden. Such was that of Tell. Such was that of Junius Brutus.

It was now a full hour that Godwin had arrived at this spot; and he was yet in the same untamed mood :—untamed, even by the extraordinary beauty which a fine sun-

rise was now shedding over that beautiful scene: for the mist had all rolled away; the rich rosy light was falling playfully on the *shimmering* sheet of water, coming slant and checquered through the scarce stirring and dew-jewelled leaves, rich in all the expanded verdure of mid-summer: among those leaves the many-voiced birds were trilling their morning-song of joy; and the tinkling bubble of the unseen brook joined as an instrumental accompaniment to their vocal chorus. But all this was lost on Godwin—there was no passage to his heart either through his eyes or his ears: in that sweet hour of calm, in that fair scene of quiet, he was raving like a madman; and the now hoarse tones of his voice kept startling the echoes of that gentle solitude. At that time he spoke as follows:—

“No help?—None?—None from man—nor saint—nor God?—None. Nor from Devil?—ha!—if Heaven will not help, will not Hell?”

The loud cry with which he uttered this for a moment hushed even the frightened birds; and for the moment the stillness startled Godwin; but he immediately went on:—

“Ha! ha!—ha, ha! mayhap it shall be so—mayhap Hell will help me—a trial! I call for a trial—a trial of their might to aid when wanted—they come not—none comes: oh! how I wish—aye, spite of this sweat that beads my brow, I do wish that the great Foe of our kind but dared—now and here—to come and. .’

While these words were yet living on his lips, he was startled by the sound of sharp ringing metal, and by the sight of the figure as of an armed man, who leapt, seemingly from behind the Shimmer-stone, down within arm’s length by his side.

Godwin’s first feeling was that of extreme fear, and he cowered under it; and as he so stooped, cowering and trembling, if the painter’s pencil had transferred those two figures to the canvass, it would hardly have been possible to have exhibited a greater contrast both in dress, mien and bearing.

For the stranger, after the first bend with which he had bounded to the earth, stood upright, firm and fearless; he was clad in armour; his helmet, in form nearly fitting to the head, with a strong sharp

spike at the top, was of bright yellow metal; his body-armour was of tegulated-mail of the same material fitting tight to the arms, shoulders, chest and back, girded round the waist with a narrow belt of black leather and falling loosely nearly to the knees; close hose or stockings of scarlet cloth were on his legs; and yellow-thonged sandals on his feet; on his left side, hung by a yellow metal chain from his shoulder, was a broad straight sword, in a plain scarlet cloth sheath; and in his right hand he bore a bright steel-headed spear of at least twelve feet in length: his face was fair; but his eyes black and bright as starry midnight; black also was his beard, which grew over cheek and chin, as well as his hair, which fell from under his helmet in long curls full half way down his back.

Godwin on the other hand had no weapon either offensive or defensive, save a short hand-knife, stuck unsheathed in his undressed leathern girdle; his tunic, of the same shape as the stranger's coat of mail, was of coarse grey woollen stuff; his stockings were bandages of the same material; his *shoon* also of undressed

leather, rudely constructed and fastened round the feet and ancles with unsightly thongs; and his body was wrapped in a large full fold of woollen stuff, striped with broad lines of black and grey, and worn over the left shoulder and under the right arm. Godwin's face too was fair, but his eyes were correspondingly blue and clear as sunny noon day; and his just bristling beard and his still close curling hair, unconfined by cap or bonnet, were of the brightest auburn.

Not a minute had they gazed on one another, when the stranger spoke, saying:—

“Hail, youth!”

At the sound of his voice, Godwin started to his feet and stood as upright as he, and answered:—“Hail, Stranger!”

Stran. How namest thou thyself?

Godw. Godwin Ulfnothson; and thou, by thy tongue, art no Saxon;—a Dane, I wis—and of them that fight against our land. What wouldst thou of *me*?

Stran. Help.

Godw. Of me? in what wise?

Stran. That thou shouldst tell me how far hence to the mouth of the Severn river, where our ships lie; and show me the road thither.

Godw. How foolish must that Dane be, who would trust his safety to a Saxon.

Stran. The brave man fears not the foe whom he trusteth; nor will a brave foe, so trusted, break that trust. We fought again yestern with thy landsmen, and—if not worsted—at least we gat not the better: I lost my way toward evenfall; and have wandered the live-long night amid these woods and hills. Lead me to our ships and I will well reward thee; I speak not of what I would do for thee, were we Danes the lords of this Anglen land; but, as we are, I will give thee gold enough to buy tenfold as many herds as thine, if they be thine, that I saw grazing in yonder meadow. What sayest thou to my bidding?

Godw. The road is not long thither, Dane; but it might be fearsome to guide thee along it. The landsmen, enheartened by their yesterday's luck, will be on the look out on all sides; and they would spare neither thee nor thy guide.

Stran. It need not seem that thou art my guide—and then surely they will not harm thee ?

The Dane said this as though he looked for an answer; but Godwin gave him none; he seemed lost in deep thought. The Dane drew off the mailed glove of his right hand, and from the fourth finger he took a massy gold ring, fashioned like a twisted serpent, the flat part of whose head was a plate of steel; on it were engraved the words *Ulf in Noþ* (*Ulf in Noth* or *Help in need.*) He put this ring into Godwin's hand and said:—"Take this as earnest of what I will do here after—the toy is of some worth."

Godwin took the ring in his hand—looked at it for a moment and then suddenly asked: "What is thy name, stranger?"

Stran. It stands on my ring. My name is Ulf.

Godwin muttered to himself—Ulf—Ulf-noth—it is strange.

Ulf. What is strange? (he received no answer.) Wilt thou aid me?

Still for a second or two no answer; at last

Godwin spoke:—"Take back thy ring, Dane, I will take neither bribe nor reward: but I will try and lead thee to thy ships."

Ulf. I thank thee, Saxon; and at least I will do *that* again when I am safe.

Godwin now took off his striped cloak and so adjusted it on Ulf's shoulders as to hide his glittering armour; he put in his hand also instead of his spear, which the Dane threw aside, the staff which he had himself carried; and thus clad, the Dane followed the Saxon neatherd through the ashen-copse, towards the lea where the beasts were grazing. Scarcely however had Godwin stepped out into the opener space, than he turned sharply round on his follower, and with a quickness, curiously contrasting with his former manner, which for some minutes had been slow and thoughtful and almost absent, he plucked the helmet from the Dane's head, and dashed it deeply among the neighbouring bushes, at the same time crying out:—"By St. Mary! but I forgot that!"

Ulf. Good lad! thou knowest not the worth of the helm thou throwest away.

Godw. Is it of more than the head it warded?
—See yonder.

He pointed to the top of the hills, now to their left, where stood a party of half a score rudely armed peasants. Ulf was about to withdraw into the copse again; but Godwin caught him by the arm, and said:—"No—lest they have seen us. Do the mantle over thy head: bear thyself boldly; and come on. Seem not to mark them till they speak."

Whether or not the peasants had before seen them, they were no sooner fairly out of the copse than one of the party called down to them:—"Ho! who goes there?"

Godw. Friends. The good morning to thee, Walther.

Wal. Young Heort?

Godw. The same. (For by that name, signifying herdsman, Godwin was known among the country people.)

Wal. Who with thee?

Godw. A friend. What do ye?

Wal. We seek the runaway Danes. We have here three; and they say there lurks one

of wealth and might among these woods: but we shall fang him. Farewell.

Godwin repeated the greeting; and the countrymen descended behind the rocks in the very direction, whence Ulf had sprung down a few minutes before; so that had the Saxons been those few minutes sooner, they would certainly have taken him.

God. So that is over, Dane; thou wilt hardly blame me that I have lied for thy sake.

Ulf. Nay, not so, Saxon; thou namedst me thy friend; at least thou art mine.

God. Well. Let us wend quickly; but yet not rashly.

And driving the astonished herd homeward, they soon presented themselves before the no less astonished Ulfnoth.

Godwin briefly gave his father to know what the stranger was; he was at once hospitably received; and his armour and showy apparel were, without loss of time, effectually concealed beneath the entire dress of a Saxon peasant. Godwin proposed to send Aelsig out with the herds; but his father more cautiously kept him at home, lest the boy should

babble of their having a stranger for a guest; and the old man's caution was in the nature of one thought for the stranger, and two for himself; for if any of his countrymen should learn the fact of his harbouring a Dane, and especially one of wealth, as Ulf clearly was (for Godwin's father easily perceived that the armour was richly gilt) he was well aware they would not only disregard the rites of hospitality, but would rigidly punish the host, who had exercised them.

The morning-meal however was hastened for the hungry wanderer; previous to which Ulfnoth and his son pledged the stranger, each drinking to the other's health in a cup of ale: a custom then of late introduction into the country, which in fact had arisen from the many murders committed between the Danes and the English, when they were feasting together; the unguarded posture of drinking presenting too inviting a temptation for the dagger of a malicious foeman; and the above-mentioned pledge, (from which our English habit of taking wine with one another is said to be derived) was adopted as the means of preventing such unmanly attacks; and strange

to say, the precaution rarely, if ever, was found ineffectual. After the meal was over, Aelsig was dispatched about household affairs into an inner room, so that he could not leave the hovel unseen, as he would needs have to pass through the room where they were sitting. The greater part of the day was consumed in not unfriendly conversation; for, although frequently urged both by father and son, the Dane would not dream of retiring to rest himself; and it must be owned, the forbearance on his part arose less from courtesy than from suspicion; which, seeing how boldly and frankly he had acted with Godwin, on their first interview, may seem strange; but then it must be remembered that Ulf's situation at that time was pretty nearly as bad as it could be; so that any adventure could not well have made it worse; and at any rate he had no great reason, armed as he was, to fear much from a neatherd whom in fact his very appearance, as we have read, almost frightened out of his wits: besides it must also be taken into consideration, that at that time he was almost starving with hunger, and a starving man

is not always very prudent, as we may see even in these refined and wiser days, when a man in the extremity of hunger has been known to be so imprudent as to take a half-penny roll from a baker's window, at the imminent risk of incurring the very just and commensurate punishment of transportation.

But Ulf's hunger being now appeased, and his situation somewhat bettered, it might be a natural sort of reaction, that he should now begin to think he might be worse off than he was, and to feel not very secure as the duration of his present security. In fact however this was not all; he had observed that the old Saxon had all but asked him what his rank in life was, which the Dane thought impertinent in every sense of the word; that the father and son had from time to time exchanged, as he thought, very knowing looks with one another; and moreover that the conversation had begun to flag good deal; (for the idea never occurred to him that his own suspicions might perhaps have made himself less talkative;) and about an hour before the evening meal-tide (as soon after which as it should be dark enough, it had

been agreed that he and Godwin were to start on their journey) when the old father got up and in plain English told his son he wished to speak with him in secret—and when in fact this secret conference seemed to be stretching to the whole length of this hour,—Ulf became what a modern officer would call “quite nervous.”

CHAPTER III.

THAT there may be however no chance of the reader's unnecessarily participating in the Dane's anxiety, the whole of the conversation between father and son shall be laid before him. They proceeded not many yards from the hovel, and then turned to the right, down a fine and probably natural avenue of large beeches; the whole length of which, about forty yards, and half-way back again, they walked before either uttered a word; and then the father broke the silence:—

*Ulf*n. And so thou wilt risk the travel with this Dane, Godwin?

Godw. Surely, my father: should I not?

*Ulf*n. I would have thee do as thou thinkest best.

Godw. Nay, my dear father, may it please thee rather to give me rede herein.

Ulfñ. What thinkest thou to do, when thou shalt have seen him safe among his landsmen?

Godw. Surely to return hither, father.

Ulfñ. Nay, do not that, my son. There were little wit in that. Our landsmen will be wood when they shall know of thy aiding the Dane's escape, as they surely shall know it through Aelsig, therefore this place will not be safe for thee.

Godw. Then I shall not aid the Dane.

Ulfñ. Is not thy word pledged thereto?

Godw. I shall break it.

Ulfñ. Would that be wise, my son; or right?

Godw. Both, I think, my father; for must not what is right be wise? and this would be right.

Ulfñ. I cannot think so.

Godw. Yes, my father; when I undertook to aid this stranger I did so at all risk that might befall myself, but myself only: if thou think our landsmen shall find out what I have done herein, well I know their wrath will not fall on me only; and the less so that I shall be beyond

their reach; but on thee, my loved father, will they pour out the wrath, which if at all, should only fall on thy son.

Ulf. But that they shall not; for mark me, I too shall leave this place when thou dost; and therefore do I give thee rede not to return hither.

Godw. Thou leave here, father? and shall the son, by any kindness to another, drive his father from the home of his old age to harbour among strangers? That may never be.

Ulf. Nor shall it be. My home I shall leave willingly, not driven thence; and not among strangers shall I harbour, but among friends; I go to Lundene, son, where I have many friends.

Godw. In Lundene! so far away, my father?

Ulf. Yes, my son, the friends of thy father's youth are there in many; and thither will I go.

Godw. I will with thee, father; I will leave this Dane to shift for himself; thou and I will not part, beloved father.

Ulf. Yea, my son, it were better, both for my good, and for thine, that we should for a

while part. Listen to me;—or let me first ask thee, rememberest thou much of thine early childhood?

Godw. Before I came to live here with thee, father? I well remember *that*.

Ulfñ. It is of before that time I ask thee.

Godw. I remember not many things; I mean other than I have met with ere I came hither; save that I herded swine or sheep, instead of kine and oxen. I remember too that those I lived with treated me kindly and called me son; and I loved them and grieved to leave them; and methinks I must have come a long way hither, for I remember walking many—many days till I was sore weary, ere I reached hither.

Ulfñ. Thou sayest right, my son; thou wert then dwelling far hence in the north of Northumberland. But rememberest thou of nothing even before that time?

Godw. No—and yet I have somewhiles had, as it were, day-dreams of another life, wherein methought I remembered myself to have been among lofty houses, such as I

have never in truth seen, or only in passing through towns hither; but then methought I lived in them; and among much wealth, and the shene of gold and silver; and with many folks, such as I never saw—neither here, nor in the Northumbrian woods; and it was strange enough, but when yon Dane jumped down from the side of the Shimmer-stone this morn, decked in all his glittering weapons, it was just as though one of the forms of these my dreams stood living and in the flesh before me: but I remember nothing staidly.

Ulf. Yet thy remembrance is no dream, Godwin; for I will now tell thee what I have long been about to tell thee, what I much wish I had before told thee; and would have yestern night, but thou couldst not then bend thine ear to hear me: hear me then now thou art no son of a neatherd.

Godw. Oh! Ulfnoth—my father—tarry, I pray thee, what wouldst thou tell me? not *that*; not that I am another's son.

Ulf. Ulfnoth the neatherd is not thy father, Godwin; and yet am I thy father.

Godw. Thou speakest a riddle, father.

Ulf. Surely not uneasy to unriddle, Godwin; I am thy father; but I am no neatherd.

Godw. How! no neatherd! do I dream now?—Or were my former dream-like thoughts truths?—No neatherd?

Ulf. Go; ask the monks that gather up the lore of our land, Who is Ulfnoth? Know ye of him? Go; ask it of the makers, that sing the lays of the brave and the mighty, and they shall both answer; We know him well: Ulfnoth the Ealdorman—Ulfnoth the Childe of the south-Saxons. Such was thy father, Godwin; such was I.

Godw. Thou! my father!—a Thane!—and I then an Eorl: oh, Aelfgiva! Aelfgiva! hadst thou known this.

Ulf. She had loved thee; a poor maiden—would that have been—

Godw. No, my father, not me; but mayhap my state—not Godwin the Cheorl but Godwin the Eorl—to him she might have listened—but Godwin knows her now—and himself too better than he did when she yestern morning scorned him—proud, haughty, woman—mayest thou too meet—but no—I will not ban thee—

He had stopped short, and with raised hands looked up, as though through the thickly-pleached boughs above him, he would have called down a curse from heaven; he now bent his head down on his chest—was silent for a moment—and then again resuming his walk addressed his father :

Godw. Go on, I beg thee, my father, I will not break in on thee again; and mark not what I have just said.

Ulf. My son, to tell thee all that is meet for thee to know would take a longer time than we can bestow thereon; yet all that is needful for thee to know will I shortly unfold to thee. Thy mother, Godwin, fared forth from this world, when thou, our only child, wert but scarce five winters old; thou hadst lived up to that time as a babe in the bosom of wealth and ease; but trouble soon arose, which made me deem that a fitter home might be found for thee than mine own,—and some one who might as then better fulfil the duties of a father to thee, than could I,—a warrior: still I loved not to part from thee; but I know not what might have happened had it not been

for that fearful and countless slaughter of the Danes, that took place on St. Bricemas-day, whereof thou must have heard,—as what Saxon hath not? for do not our landsmen to this day, as they belike will for all coming ages, keep up the shocking remembrance of that bloody massacre? turning to a rejoicing what then was, and aye should be a thing for weeping and wailing. Oh! Godwin, my son! but that was a fearful day, and may God grant we never see such again. The sun, that rose over a smiling and peaceful land, ere he set, saw that land all drenched and reeking with the blood of men—why say I of men? for neither women nor children—not even babies at their mother's breast were spared from the butcher's knife. Oh God! why must I recall that sight! (The old man stopped his foot, though he went on with his narrative.) Or why saw I it at all? I was in Lundene at the time, Godwin; and never—never shall I forget my fear and dread on that dreadful day. The slaughter was begun at a town in Hertfordshire, about a score and three miles from Lundene; the place has ill been called Welwin,

from that day's deeds; for little indeed of weal did England win therefrom. I was roused from slumber early in the morning by cries of murder! The yells of the slaughterers, and the shrieks and groans of the slaughtered mingled frightfully together: I had known nothing of what was about to take place, neither I nor any English Thane hardly then in the town. It was that traitor, Aedric Streona's work; that I must call him uncle! (wa la! traitor that he is both to King and kin)—for he had told the too believing King that the Danes were all sworn to beshrew him of his life;—and afterwards all his Witan; and then have his kingdom without any withstanding. I believed not the tale; but the king did—and the slaughter was done—the slaughter of nearly all the Danes that were dwelling and had for years dwelt in the kingdom. I walked that day through the streets of Lundene, that were miry, and in some places in pools over my schoon with blood. But the worst sight of all—it was the death of a woman, Godwin—a lady she was—the sister of the Danish King Swegen, the father of this King, who is now fighting

with King Edmund of the Iron Side:—her name was Gunhilda. She was beautiful as beauty; I never saw but one woman like her, and that was thy assoilzied mother, Godwin; they were as like each other, as though they had been sisters, yet were they no kindred. Gunhilda had wedded an English Eorl—Pallig by name—I knew him well; she had first of her own will taken up Christenhood: but her husband had the year before unhappily joined with his ships some of her roving landsmen who came too often to this our land—harrying and burning wherever they went—and Pallig, to whom King Aethelred had been formerly kind and dear, joined the Danes: for Aedric had stung him to the quick with taunts and ill-deeds,—and the King had withdrawn his love from him,—and Pallig in wrath had so shaken off the truth he had sworn to the King: but Gunhilda sent to him, and bade him come back to his truth and leave her landsmen, and she gave herself a pledge to Aedric that her husband would return;—and he did so, the eve only of St. Bricemas day: and on the noon of that day did these eyes behold the fall of all

that house. The place of their death was in a field belonging to a farm, called the Ceolmundinge Haga, not far from the western gate of the town of Lundene. There was a great crowd of folk there to witness their death; and Aedric himself was there; but not the King. The block that the headsman was about to use was nothing but the unsawn bole of a large oak, which had lately been felled, and fallen in that place. The cart came up with Gunhilda, Pallig and their child—a daughter—and not six years old. All eyes were drawn to Gunhilda;—she came down staidly from the cart, and stood looking fixedly on her husband—her arms crossed over her breast, which, with one of her shoulders, was bare, but for the long flaxen hair that veiled them: she and Pallig kissed each other—and then he laid his head on the block; it was stricken off at one blow, and rolled all blood-besmeared to the wife's feet. She had been ashy pale, and when the blow fell, her hue changed to blood-red; but not a feature stirred, nor came the slightest sound from her lips. Her features soon set into their former paleness, and she kissed her babe

and moved forward towards the headsman: but Aedric from his place cried harshly: No! and pointed with his staff to the child. Then the poor mother flushed again—and held her breath—and bit her lips—and turned her eye almost beseechingly to Aedric—but she saw the calm sternness, that was in his, and answered it with hers. Another moment and the headsman's knife was in her child's heart; and then, Gunhilda, uttering a shriek, so shrill, that the hills and woods around sounded it again, threw herself on both her knees, and raising her eyes and both her hands to heaven, cried thus ;—Oh God! God! God! wilt thou not awreak this murder? upon all who aid it—upon all who witness it—and upon their kith and kin—and upon all this hated land; tenfold—aye a hundred fold wilt thou not awreak it? Butchers! hear me! for I speak your doom. Murderers! listen to me! for my tongue thrills with the truth of the times to come. Woe! woe,—upon you—Woe and death! death in the field of battle—and in the bed of ease—death in the market—and in the hall; feasting and fasting—in joy and in pain—woe and death

upon you! May your own land drink your own blood—till she stink with the drunkenness thereof—may she drink it; may your men be craven in fight and traitors in peace; may your women be harlots to their husbands—haters of their offspring—may your children turn like adders on you :—strife be of your councils—hopelessness come down upon your souls and blight them—and then, when in sheer cowardice ye would pray a blessing of your God, may ye ask a curse, and have it—mine—and my blood be on you, and your children, and your children's children. She fell forward—I saw the headman's axe glitter aloft—I turned my face—I heard a heavy sound—I looked again—and the once worshipped Gunhilda was a headless trunk.

The old Ealdorman paused, and leant against a tree, overcome by the mighty host of emotions which his memory had stirred up within him. Godwin too was silent, not unmoved by this harrowing tale; after a minute or so Ulfnoth wrung his son's hand and then went on;—"I know not, my son, why I have told thee of all this, save that the recollections thronged

so thickly, and weighed so heavily on my heart, that I could not but disburthen it. The rest shall be told quickly. That very day of St. Brice, ere I had hardly gat over from the shock my feelings had undergone, I took to horse and rode, without once resting by the way, to my strong house at Dofre where I had left thee; and in fear for thy safety, though I hardly know what I feared, I gave thee to the care of a trusty friend and sent thee away to a kinsman in the north, with a strong charge that he should rear thee unknowing of thy birth, nor tell thee thereof but upon my death. Seven long years passed ere mine eyes again beheld my son; but I often heard of Godwin. Meanwhile Gunhilda's curse fell heavily on the land: woe and death *were* upon us—in every shape: the Danes with their wonted leaders—fire and iron—harried our land: Swegen, the brother of Gunhilda, came the year after her death with a mighty force; and his men, after forcing the English to give them food, were wont to slay the host and burn the hostelry. During all that time I was often in toil and turmoil, and ever at odds with the shameless

Aedric and his as shameless brother Brihtric. At length they thoroughly poisoned King Aethelred's heart against me, so that he loathed me, and they taught him to think me guilty of having forsworn myself against him. Then in great wrath I fled and gathered together what ships I could, and harried all along the south coast and wrought all the evil I could to Aedric and his brother; yet often while I was thus doing Gunhilda's words would come athawrt me and I would feel they were being fulfilled, and that I was indeed as a tool working out her curse on our land; and then I would think with myself that it were better I should rest under mine ills, than add to those of my fatherland; but it was not yet so to be: for Brihtric had heard he might easily seize me if he would look well about; so he took eighty of the King's ships that were got together to hold this land safe from out-forces. I had at most but twenty ships: and he thought he should work himself much worship in getting me into his hands quick or dead. But as they were coming down towards me there rose against them a wind such as no man before minded, and beat

and broke their ships, and threw them on land; then I soon came up to them and burned them; and as I heard afterwards, when tidings how these had fared reached the other ships where the King was, it was as though they were all redeless; and the King went home; and all the Ealdormen and High-Wittan left their ships. And now wishing not that this evil should spread too far, I also left my ships; only my friends being aware whither I was going; and I came hither and took up a herdsman's dress and dwelling and sent for thee. We have lived here now, my son, together for seven years—the same time that we were before parted—and now we part again.”——

Godw. Dear father, need I say how heedfully I have listened to thy marvellous tale? It hath saddened me—or rather made me earnest; but this doth sadden me that thou shouldst say we must now part; why so, my father, may thy son, without angering thee, ask thee why? May I not go with thee to Lunden, my father, and live with thee there, if thou now deem it needful to wend thither. Let us not part, father. I am so young

too, younger than my years in all worldly wisdom ; and what shall I do if left without thy kindly rede and aid ? Shall I not surely founder as a boat at sea without rower or rudder ? I pray thee, dear father, if it shall seem meet to thee, take me with thee.

Ulfñ. That cannot be ; better we should stay here, Godwin, unknown and unmarked, than that the father, to further his own worship-greedy plans, should bring his son's life into danger.

Godw. Then stay we here, dear father ; stay we here unmarked and unknown. I am well enough therewith : I seek not to be known or noted more than as young Heort Ulfnothson. And sure the worship thou sayst thou art greedy of, can never make amends for, or weigh as much as the happiness we have shared together here.

Ulfñ. Thou speakest, son, in sooth as one young in the wisdom of the world ; wait but till a few years more shall have darkened thy cheeks, and seamed thy brow, and thou shalt think far other from what thou thinkest now ; wait but even till thou have seen some of this

world's wealth and joy; till thou hast tasted how sweet are many of the apples that hang on the tree of life, and thou wilt yearn to pluck more, and long to have of that wealth and joy, and be as greedy after worship as ever was thy father Ulfnoth. I know thou hast spoken now as thou now feelest—but so thou wilt not always feel; nay, so hast thou not always felt. I have marked thee and thy feelings, Godwin, and the things that have been as spurs both to thy feelings and thy deeds; and I know, though thou mayst thyself not know it, that thou too art not without hunger after worship—else why thy striving to be master always at all games, whether of chance or of strength? Why thy lust to be King at leaping and hurling the quoit, wrestling and staff-playing? Thou art not one that in after-life will sit down and think enough of lowliness. Nay, dear son, I know thee better nor thou knowest thyself. Harken to the words of thy father. Go with this Dane to the ships of King Knouthe; from the stranger's dress and bearing and words, I deem him to be of high and lordly birth; and surely

he will not be thankless for the toil and danger thou shalt have thoroughgone to help him. Stay then with the Danes....

Godw. Stay with the Danes, my father! the foes, the bitter foes of our poor land!

Ufn. Even so, Godwin; stay with them, and as a friend: I tell thee, boy, our land *is* undone—our landsmen have undone it. Gunhilda's curse hath been y-wroken—but not yet to the uttermost: and in a falling house shall not every one save himself?—I speak to thee of that, which belike smacks more of guile than of wisdom; nevertheless such is my speech, and such my rede, and be ruled by me therein. Make a friend of this Dane; thou well mayest: nor deem, Godwin, that in aught I have here said, I have bidden thee to hate our land, or leave its weal. Mayhap the time may come—thou doing as I rede thee—that thou mayst more mightily aid thy land, than ever thy single arm, or that of a hundred backing thine could now do. So now thou knowest my will: answer not, but do it: thou shalt hear from me from time to time. And now, dear son, let

us in; or yonder stranger will indeed much wonder at our long tarrying.

They moved towards the door; Godwin, as bidden, making no reply to his father's strange counsel, which did indeed to his mind savour more of policy than of honesty. At the door they found Ulf standing, whose anxiety had by this time risen to fever-heat, and impelled him to go and seek either the cause of his host's absence, or the means of his safety in flight.

After a few incidental compliments they all turned again into the hovel; and in a few minutes sat down to their evening-meal. It was finished, and Godwin had not yet, or hardly spoken. His father sent Aelsig, who had tended them, out of the hovel on some errand which he whispered in his ear; and when the lad presently returned, and signified he had done as had been bidden, the old man rose and said;—"Dane; the evening wears. Thou wilt be thinking of departing?"

*Ulf*n. I am ready, Saxon. Is thy son?

Godw. I am.

*Ulf*n. The shades of night forespeak to hide

you. May ye fare well and safely. Two horses are saddled for you at the door. Dane, I trust to thee mine only son; and hope, that if ye reach the King, and thy voice can aught avail, thou wilt get him entered into the kingly household. Here he cannot stay; for should our landsmen know that he saved thee, his own safety would be truly doubtful. We are not what we seem; our tale he will tell thee on your road; and now again farewell, Godwin, and—God bless thee.—(In thine ear this—thy great uncle Aedric *was* once in truth a herdsman,—he is now a wealthy Ealdorman—be as he is in all but his tricking.) Farewell to both.

Ulf. Farewell, my kind harbourer. I hope I shall never have need to change the first feelings of trust and kindness I had toward thy son. Farewell.

After the father and son had heartily embraced, Godwin and the Dane mounted the horses and departed. They travelled during the whole night; and during their journey, Ulf again was won by the frankness and yet evident melancholy of Godwin, who told him all his story, fully to confide in him.

CHAPTER IV.

AT day break the following morning from the top of a hill they caught the first view of the Severn; whose waters being at low tide had left the estuary a bare desert of moist and glistening sand and mud, except where here and there small pools remained, or rivulets were rolling down towards the main stream—like a brood of young snakes hastening to their dam: along the margins of these, and of the river, were innumerable hosts of the different tribes of water-fowl, seeking their shelly food, at that most favourable hour when the absence of both the waters and the day, gave them the double chance of being undisturbed by man. So thoroughly different was the face of the scene, that though Ulf well remembered the spot, whereon he then halted, he could

hardly bring himself to believe, that the inaccessible stream, which he now beheld could be the same, which a day or two before he had seen flooded up to its willowy banks ; and bearing with ease and safety the whole of the Danish fleet: and moreover that said fleet, to Ulf's further discomfort and consternation, had totally disappeared : after ascertaining however, from Godwin that he was certain *that* was the Severn—and being himself as certain *this* was the hill, where he had dined a few days back, he continued riding on in the expectation that the vessels had got under weigh, and dropped further down the river—at any rate with the hope of falling in with some of the natives, who might give him some information concerning the destination of his countrymen. He thought it prudent however to avoid the villages, lest the not very usual circumstance of two peasants being mounted should attract observation, and curiosity by any means hunt out that he was a Dane.

After some time riding in this way, as they turned the corner of a wood, they perceived

coming towards them, at not many yards distance, a single armed horseman ; Ulf's first impulse was to rein in, in preparation of turning and flying ; for being but defensively armed, with the exception of his short sword, which, encumbered as he was with the peasant's dress, he could not easily get at,—nor use, if he could have got it—and knowing that his companion was quite unarmed, he was aware that they two would prove but a poor match for a well-armed soldier, if his intentions should be hostile. Ulf cried therefore “ Follow ! ” but at the very moment that he was turning his horse's head, Godwin drew his attention back by crying out :—“ See ! see ! he flies ! ”—for in truth the soldier, without deliberating even so long as Ulf had done, upon his first sight of their approach, turned tail, and was now galloping off, as fast as his horse could carry him.

Ulf stood up in his stirrups and bent his head forwards, really with the silly intention of assisting his sight of the receding object, by that projection of half a yard ; then struck his heels on his horse's sides, and galloped off as fast as *he* could after the flying man.

Godwin did not exactly know what to do ; for he shared the Dane's uncommunicated conviction that they two would be unequal to the soldier, and therefore he somewhat marvelled at Ulf's single pursuit of him ; but he had not long to reason on the matter, for Ulf turning round in his saddle, beckoned him on with his waving, and again shouted—" Follow !"

The young Saxon therefore — his fear of being thought a coward weighing, it must be owned, more with him than the love of warlike emprise—did, at his best speed, follow—but not far—for his horse in descending a grass slope stumbled against a mole-hill, and both man and beast received as good entertainment as a roll could afford them. Godwin rose unhurt, and succeeded in regaining his steed's bridle, before the latter did his legs : he remounted, with the undaunted intention of pursuing his career ; but he stopped first to reconnoitre, for while he was rolling he thought he heard Ulf shouting very loud, — but what, he could not make out,—and on now looking he beheld that the soldier was staying

still, awaiting the arrival of Ulf. Godwin was again astonished to find that the latter slackened nothing of his speed, towards such apparent peril ; so as in common duty bound, he galloped on again to see what help he could give his comrade in the approaching encounter ; shouting nevertheless to him as loud as his loss of breath would let him, to wait till he overtook him : but all in vain ; on rode Ulf, either not hearing or not heeding, till he came up with the stranger ; and then Godwin, expecting to see the former at once tumbled out of his saddle, was disappointed ; for as well as he could see—and that was not over-well, as the east-wind, that he was riding against, had filled his eyes with salt water,—their meeting seemed quite friendly ; still he did not think it right to give over his exertions to come up with Ulf ; though his late fall suggested it might be prudent a little to abate them. He did so accordingly—and in less than a minute stopped suddenly, at seeing the soldier fall from his saddle—Ulf turn round and gallop back ; and hearing a loud shout as from the wood

on the left of the latter, whose voice he also heard overtopping that shout, and crying: "Back! back! for life."

Back therefore rode Godwin: just as he turned the corner they had before come round, he threw a hasty glance behind, and saw that Ulf was coming after him, pursued by a large band of men incompletely armed, and apparently all on foot: this was in their favour, and Godwin therefore made the most of it, and did not look round again till he halted at what he considered a safe distance from all pursuit or surprize, nearly in the middle of a large open field; where, when he did look round and could see no sign whatever of his Danish comrade, he began to accuse himself of having acted very unfairly towards him: and perhaps the gentle reader will be of the same opinion; even if he do not go farther, and think this young Saxon a downright coward: but this would be a mistake of the gentle reader's, for Godwin was not a coward—he had lived the life of a neatherd, (any idea of a pun is solemnly deprecated),—and he had been taken suddenly from that life of quiet, and thrust into a scene

of doubt and danger—and it was the doubt rather than the danger that took him by surprise ; for had Godwin been placed that day in a field of battle, perhaps he would not have yielded in bravery to the bravest ; as it was, that presence of mind which he might then have commanded, had now escaped him, owing to the very uncertainty of the perils to which it was to be opposed ; and therefore, when he began to cautiously retrace the ground he had just rode over, in hopes of falling in with the Dane, a shout from the left, drove him startled off to the right at full speed again.

The shout however was repeated, and he heard his own name called—and looking back he saw Ulf pricking across the field towards him. Stupified with shame, Godwin waited his arrival, expecting to be overwhelmed with taunts or reproaches, but the Dane rode up smiling good humouredly, and said ;—
“ Why, Gudín, (according to his vernacular pronunciation of the name) we say in Dæne-mearke

‘ Hard to know
Friend from foe !’

Wottest thou of our saw, that thou fleddest so from me ?”

Godw. In sooth I—no—I knew thee not.

Ulf. I thought not. I sped round there rightward, deeming as it turned out, that so we should split our followers.

Godw. What were they ?—I should not have left thee.

Ulf. Nay, but I am glad thou didst. What were they ? why they were landsfolk of thine I wis ; by the wondersome ill-will they seemed to bear to me and poor Olau yonder.

Godw. Knewest thou him then ?

Ulf. Aye—but first let us think which way we should ride. Whither lies Lundene !

Godw. I wot not.

Ulf. It should be south-east from where our ships lay, as I was told ; but which the south-east may be, I wot not.

Godw. That I can tell thee. Yonder.

Ulf. Why how knowest....? Oh ! thy former calling hath taught thee the lore of the heavens. Well ! yonderwards then we will ride, and cannot far miss our mark.

Godw. Ride we then to Lundene ?

Ulf. Even thither—for thither have marched our men, and sailed our ships—so Olau told me.

Godw. A landsman of thine belike?

Ulf. Nay—a Sweathe; but of our host: he was wounded at Scearstan I know, and I take it came up hither too late for our ships. Poor Olau! we never were great friends—but never more shall we be foes.

Godw. He is dead then. I saw him fall; felled, I wis, by the men that followed us.

Ulf. A curse on their Saxon] souls! nay, I forgot myself, friend: even as thou sayest, Olau is dead; at least I think so—for a dart was sent from the ambush, which nigh took away my right ear by the way, and struck him in his neck. I rode off, seeing him fall, and that my foes, who then first shewed themselves, were so many; and on looking back I saw one bare the Sweatheman's head on the top of a spear: from all which I gather that he is dead. And now, Godwin, as we must be safe from all following, and I wax wonderously hungry, to say nought of my being something weary, what if we unhorse ourselves awhile, and look into those

wallets, that thy good father hath foreseen us with: yon pretty brook under the trees shall be the true place for a short meal and rest; and may help us to a draught, when all our ale is drunken; or weaken it a whit, if mayhap I should find your Saxon barley wine too strong for my poor Danish brains.

Godw. What shall we do with the horses?

Ulf. Why, poor things! let them have a bit of food and rest too; they shall find enough sweet grass to graze on hereabouts. Stay—let us tie their bridle-thongs together. Now, they must be right cunning to get away; or strangely one-minded: and that they are not, for see, the mare wants a drink of the brook before her food, and the stallion seems liefer to fall a grazing.—So, ho! there!—Nay, let them at ease, Gudín; let them fight out their own fights.—Now what have we here?—Bread and cheese!—a hungry man could wish no better—aha! but better there is, I see, without the wishing for: what meat is this?

Godw. Dried swine's flesh.

Ulf. We'll moisten it anon, Gudín: it smacks well, though somewhat saltish in sooth, that

it makes a man forget his manners, and drink ere his fellow: thou canst not pledge me, as there is but one skin between us: but the Fiend is in the drink if I cannot trust thee by this.

Godw. In spite of my leaving thee just now?

Ulf. Ah! that ale's as strong as brand-wine:—aye; spite of any thing:—drink, good fellow mine.

Godw. Wuss hail!

Ulf. Lo there! the winsome mare hath her way after all! she hath coaxed the stallion to the water's brink.

Godw. We have a saw in west Seaxena:

The grey mare bith the better horse.

Ulf. Good; that's good:

The grey mare bith the better horse.

and true for thee here; as thy mare is of that hue, and hath proved herself the better.

The grey mare is the better horse—

And yet the stallion's none the worse.

They tell me I have some skill in rhyme-craft, Gudin; but I believe them not; yet

that first line likes me well: for so it is in good sooth and earnest, both with grey mares, and white women: the *she* hath ever the better, as thou wilt own some day, young friend, when thou shalt learn somewhat of such things. Give me the ale, if thou hast not emptied the....What? aha! then thou *hast* learnt something of these things already? awell! never too late to mend, they say; never too early to make, say I.—Is she a bonny wench?

Godw. In sooth, friend Dane, thou art wrong—I am—there was no thought in my head of any woman.

Ulf. No—I'll be sworn for thee.—Ah! a draught of that ale is worth a hard day's work—here—empty the flask—no—thou thinkest not of women—never a thought of one in thy head just then—nor in thy heart—eh? I could wonder what made it pump all the red blood into thy cheeks then, at what I said:—Well—I am wondrous heavy—it's the ale, methinks—I shall wrap me in my cloak, and stretch me down here—and nap a while—wilt thou keep watch so long?—Gudin! wilt thou watch, whiles I sleep?

Godw. Aye—aye.

Ulf. So—so—broke into a day dream did I? thou wilt easy believe I am sorry therefore—thou wert wandering with her by moonlight just then—not true? see about thee though—look sharp—the Fiend fetch that furze-bush—how it stings a man's head;—see about thee I say, Gudín; lest one of us—yaw-aw-aw! one of us—trim Danemen—run off with thy fair—

Godw. God's curse!

Ulf. What's that? eh?

Godw. Oh—nought; I thought—a pismire stung me, I think. . . .

Ulf. How thou swarest! and at such a trifle; I thought to be sure the foe were on us; or the furze had pricked thy head; or something. . . .well, wake me not again; unless some one do come; and when I wake, if thou art weary—I'll—I'll watch for thee. Don't forget the. . . .I shan't. . . .my sleep would ha' been a cold one by this—but for thee, Gudín, I'll tell the. . . .tell my wed-brother. . . .to. . . .yes I will. . . .

Ulf having fairly talked himself to sleep,

Godwin in not the very happiest frame of mind, began the watch. After a turn or two, he sat down on the bank by his friend; feeling too restless to walk about ;—and while sitting, he could shake off his nervous feeling, he thought, by shaking his legs as rapidly as he chose: the plan succeeded to a marvel; and he soon became quite tranquil and motionless, save that every now and then his head would nod forward; and then he would find his eyes were shut; and so after a little, purely to prevent this nodding, he laid his head down on the bank; and if his eyes were shut now for longer than a minute, it was only because he never was in the habit of sleeping with them open.

CHAPTER V.

GODWIN dreamt a dream. It was a very long one; but on the whole not worth recording, for it contained an abundance of extreme absurdities, such as—that his companion was a woman and he was making love to her; that he was riding in a city, which he knew to be London, (where according to his waking memory he had never been,) with a long beard on his chin, and a king by his side;—and so forth.—

When Godwin woke, he was exceedingly vexed; not only to find that he had slept several hours; (for by the hot south sun, it was noon;) but also to see that the Dane was awake and seemingly watching—though not him; for he

was leaning against a tree, with his back turned. Godwin *was exceedingly* vexed; for he felt this was the second instance, during their short acquaintance, in which he had proved himself unworthy of it; and perhaps from the incident above dreamily hinted at, he felt quite attached to his new comrade, and very anxious that nothing should happen to interfere with their growing friendship: so he was well inclined to curse himself for having been guilty of such carelessness, which he felt assured could not but give the Dane a very poor opinion of his trustworthiness; for he thoroughly attributed Ulf's remarks on his having left him during their late flight, to a spirit of good nature and kindness that would not say anything calculated to hurt his feelings. Godwin lay therefore in this way—with his eyes wide open—chewing the cud of bitter fancy (for there was no sweet in it) and anticipating the blame, or the not less galling jests, that he expected to receive from his friend. But he made no movement to rise; the shame of being “ta'en napping,” when, according to his promise, he ought to have been up and about, so far overcame him as to superinduce a kind of stupid

lethargy, which he had no power or will to shake off: in this way therefore he lay for full ten minutes; his ill-humour with himself growing so large and unbearable, that he shifted a share of it on his friend, for not turning round and seeing that he *was* awake, which would at least have spared him the trouble of self humiliation, he thought; and just as he thought this, the Dane,—strange enough,—did turn round; and—still more strange—Godwin instinctively shut his eyes again and feigned sleep. He heard Ulf mutter something—he supposed a curse—and expected a cuff, or some such rouser; but no such thing came; and Godwin, cautiously re-opening his eyes, saw that the Dane had taken up his old station again; so that he found himself in just as unpleasant and inextricable a situation as before, and with just as little courage to attempt to remove himself from it. How long he *might* possibly have lain thus, it is not for me to say; but he did not in fact lie very long; for his sight being attracted by a something glittering in the shrubs, he turned his eyes thither, and saw a few yards from his head an upcoiled adder,

whose upraised and flattened head and quivering double tongue, pointing straight towards him, indicated no very affectionate purpose on her part. Godwin started up at once, as any man in his place probably would have done; and the adder glode away quickly into the brake, as any serpent in hers probably would.

Ulf. Why! what's come to thee, friend and fellow? so sudden a start from so sound a sleep?—(Godwin hung down his head.) Has any thing affray'd thee? bad dreams belike—ah! thou shouldst be too young and guileless to have bad dreams—we, in sooth, who have seen somewhat of the world—wa la!—well, Gudin, hast had thy rest out? I thought I would watch for thee, even till evenfall, if no harm came—for doubtless thou wert well wearied with our long ride—

Godw. Oh! friend; wilt thou forgive me?

Ulf. Forgive thee, Gudin!—here—help me gird the horses, and talk not of forgiveness, where there was no fault. Hadst thou indeed been a young warrior, and of my band—and hadst served me the trick of sleeping over thy watch—then sooth and truth something might

have been said about forgiveness, and I wis that not much of that saying should have been on my part; but thou hast led an idle life, Gudin—and therefore a little work may well over-work thee; yet—heigho! with all its idleness perhaps it was a happier one than ours—at least more guileless. So: to horse, and away.

This speech, which no one can surely doubt was meant kindly—on the whole greatly displeased the young Saxon—more than even it might have done, if it had been full of the jests or the blame, which in fancy he had so much shrunk from: in fact what the Dane had said wounded Godwin in a more sensitive part even than honour—it wounded his vanity—for Ulf spoke of him as a boy not only unused to, but quite unfit for, perils; and this galled the Saxon, who, as a peasant had been ambitious,—as a noble was already beginning to feel proud: and Ulf's speech had moreover a little hurt his conscience—for he had talk'd of his guilelessness—and Godwin's heart knew that it was not without all guile—nay—had he not two minutes ago absolutely taken himself in the manour? (to

make use of a *very* incorrect expression) had he not detected himself in the practice of a piece of (to say the least of it) unnecessary deceit?

They mounted and rode off—no incident occurring to them during the rest of the afternoon, which they passed away in conversation on various topics: but Godwin could not but think it strange that the Dane should never advert to his own rank or condition in life, which Godwin, (now that his father had expressed such an opinion), plainly saw was of a very superior grade—he ventured more than once to attempt leading the conversation to the subject; but his design was evidently seen through, and a evidently, though always good-humouredly, baffled; and Godwin did not think it prudent, nor perhaps polite, to pop the question in too undisguised a manner: and so the matter remained in mystery.

About half an hour before the sun set, they lost sight of him behind a bank to the right of the road they were riding, which had for some time lain by the side of a broadish, but not

deep rivulet, whose petty waters—like shallow-minded mortals,—made a great deal more fuss of every little obstacle they met with, than a deep and sensible river would have done of any, of even tenfold greater magnitude. The banks of this rivulet, when they first joined it, had been scarcely perceptible elevations above the plain around, and in fact should scarcely be termed the *banks*, as between them and the water's edge on either side, stretched a broad level of sand and gravel, interspersed with clusters of willows, and patches of green sward and rushes; gradually however as our travellers proceeded, these banks became higher and broader, as the marginal space within them also became more shelving and narrower; so that at the time they lost sight of the sun, the road they were on was not broad enough to allow of their riding abreast; and the western bank, (that to their right, of course) was considerably above their heads, of a steep ascent and craggy appearance, (though as much composed of marle, as of stone,) and topped by bushes, among which were here and

there seen, the huge snake-like roots of some larger trees that grew beyond their sight: the rivulet flowed to their left, and the bank on the opposite side, though as high, was not nearly so abrupt; but from its slope, it seemed rather the last of a range of gradually rising hills which were seen above it: that slope however, which continued down to the water's brink, rendered the sandy level, as long as it lasted, the preferable road.

Such was the general character of this scene, which had thus successively changed from plain to valley, and now from valley to dell: but it was by no means a plain straight-forward dell—for the rivulet, which followed its turnings, (though at first it might have been supposed to guide them,) while its course lay through level ground, had contented itself with very few and simply graceful bendings; but it now indulged in the most extraordinary sinuosities; at times sweeping round into huge circular segments; at others breaking off in almost acute angles.

Godwin was riding the first of the two, and at last Ulf called on him to stop.

Ulf. I have been thinking, friend Gudin, that it will be at least pleasant to pass the night under shelter of some roof.

Godw. I was thinking somewhat to the same end.

Ulf. And hast though thought aught of the means to bring about this wishful end, Gudin ? for methinks this dingle, by the way it is going on, if it have any outlet at all, will scanty lead to any dwelling of man.

Godw. What then is to be done ? Sleep here ?

Ulf. Not if I can help it. No, no ; that's all well enough in its fitting time, when war or need call for it ; but a man's little better than a bear, and worse than an ass, who would sleep on the cold earth under the bare sky, when he could get either straw or coverlid. Besides, we have no food. So let us cross the brook, and up yon slope, and look about us for some hut or hovel, where we may pass the night, and, if it may be, not with empty bellies.

Godw. But, Ulf, how wilt thou dare go among my landsmen ?

Ulf. Dare ! umph ! why, as for the *daring* ; that's one thing,—and I've a thought ; which is

quite another. What hinders I should pass for a kinsman of thine, riding with thee on business to Lundene?

Godw. Thy tongue, good Dane.

Ulf. But I will lose it, good Seaxan; I will be speechless for the nonce, and thou shalt give out I have been so since baby-hood; and who shall gainsay that? Not I.

Godw. I would something better might be thought of. I love not telling untruth.

So spoke Godwin, whom the reader's recollection of some late events may lead to think not the most scrupulous lover of truth. And yet Godwin spoke now most truly and sincerely; as he had done when, on his first meeting with Ulf, he half apologized for having uttered an untruth to screen him: but how many men now living are there—honourable and upright men—who, though they would scorn to utter a lie with their lips, are in the daily—almost hourly, habit of suffering themselves to be betrayed into lies in their actions—for such are all deceit and dissembling—and such are the best qualifications for the best society.

But this is moralizing. Ulf, who of course knew nothing of society—that is of what is so called now-a-days—and also nothing about Godwin’s secret thoughts or actions, did not moralize, but on the contrary whistled—loud and long—and in great surprise, and then added—“ Well, Gudin there’s no gainsaying that an untruth it should be ; but thinkest thou to go through this shuffling world, and tell nothing but truth ? Not a whit, not a whit : begin by whiles, that thy tongue may get wont to the blisters ; for they are sure to follow every falsehood ; *that* thou sure knowest. However, in downright earnest, I see no other way to help us at this shift ; and though I don’t call myself much of a liar, by my sword’s edge, this is one I would never stick to tell, and would do it now—only thou knowest that should rather spoil our sport, and mar our tale at once—’twere no sorry jest though either for a man stoutly to aver in good Danish speech, that he were a dumb Seaxon : ha ! ha ! ha ! ”

Godwin joined in the laugh ; though he felt

it was somehow something against him; and then added gravely;—"Art thou a christian, Ulf?"

Ulf. No—I am none—nor will I be. I know little of the new faith, that some of my landsmen have taken up in the stead of that of their Fathers, and of their Fathers' Great-fathers: nor love I what little I may know. Ulf should think poorly of any faith that should teach him that, rather than not speak the narrowest truth, one, with whom he had broken bread, and shaken hands, might be bewrayed even to death.

All this had been said very dignifiedly, and was taken as such by Godwin; and it is ten to one that the two hitherto friends would immediately have quarrelled, having luckily struck the very key-note of all discord and disunion, when suddenly the Dane's attention was called off to another quarter.

Between one of the hills to their left and a higher one beyond it, his eye was caught by a flickering as of myriads of minute sparks—a moment's glance informed him of the cause: down the sloping valley, formed at the junc-

ture of those two hills, were coming a large body of armed horsemen, who, from their loftier elevation, were yet exposed to the last rays of the setting sun; and their closely bristling spear-heads, and every ring or scale of their mail, each acting as a little mirror, and all in motion, reflected back those rays, as it were, broken into countless sparkles. The troop were coming at a sharp angle to our travellers, as if from somewhere about the same quarter, and towards the same point, and it was indeed evident that if they both pursued their course, they must in a few minutes join. Ulf reined in crying:

“Hey there! whom have we yonder?”

Godw. Warmen.

Ulf. It looks so.

Godw. Danes?

Ulf. Danes! no! look at yon flag, with the cross and four martletts, that flouts the dark east so bravely—hadst thou seen that standard in the throng of spears as oft as I have, thou hadst not asked that. The Seaxon host, as I am the son of Sprakalegs.

Godw. What do we?—fly?

Ulf. Aye, I think so. No. See.

He pointed to two spearmen who, having ridden to the brow of the nearer hill, seemed reconnoitring and looking towards the quarter where they sat.

Godw. Back along the glen.

Ulf. No hope of escape: our beasts are so jaded. They come down to us.

Godw. What *is* to be done then, Dane?

Ulf. Humph! 'tis n't easy to say. I know but one thing.

Godw. What? what?

Ulf. No good in telling it, as thou wilt not tell untruth.

Godw. Oh, I see; so be it then. Speak not.

Ulf. I am dumb.

If these last words of Ulf's had not been lost in the panting and puffing of the two horses, who now came up, their riders must have heard, and probably would not quite have believed them. As it was, Godwin answered to their challenge; and told the deprecated untruth glibly enough, considering how averse he had shown himself to its first proposition. After some whispering between the two spearmen they ordered our friends to follow them;

which they did; Godwin having received an admonitory wink from his comrade.

They ascended the hill in company; and in the little valley beyond they found the army had halted, and were now busily employed in pitching their tents, and making preparations for bivouacking for the night.

The spearmen rode towards a groupe of horsemen, who were then in the act of dismounting; at a little distance from them, Godwin and Ulf were ordered by their captors to halt; one of the latter rode forward to this groupe, while the other remained to watch over his charge; in about a minute his comrade returned, and said: "Bring them on. You ceorls, off your horses."

They accordingly dismounted and were ushered into the middle of the groupe, who, by their splendid dresses, were evidently men of rank. Among them stood one, by the head taller than any present, and proportionably broad-chested and strong limbed; distinguished too no less by the singular simplicity of his accoutrements, consisting chiefly of a plain shirt of steel, or rather iron scale-mail,

the meshes of which were of unusual size, and any thing but polished—a conical helmet, that might fairly be called downright rusty—and a huge axe, that might by most men have been considered unwieldy—which two latter weapons he was giving into the hands of an attendant, and therefore stood bare-headed, thus presenting the fullest view of his fine, but somewhat hard set features—his broad sharp hazel eyes, overhung by brown bushy eyebrows,—and his square forehead and almost bald crown: he eyed the new-comers for a moment, and then said with somewhat of a sneer: “A costly fang,—or as our Walish kinsman should say,—a sumptuous prize,—by my troth.” (One of the leaders said something to him in an under tone, and Godwin saw that another, who on their first arrival had drawn up his mantle so as to hide his features, and had slunk back, was now, as it seemed, making some sign to him, but what he could not comprehend: the iron clad warrior proceeded :) “Pshaw! Aedric Streona; thou wouldst see a wolf in every sheep skin; how-

be it, foster-father, as thou hast some trial, I believe, in such things of spying and treachery, thou mayest e'en talk with them, an it list thee. I go to my tent."

He walked away, accompanied by most of the party; and the individual he had thus addressed, (of whom the reader has before heard something,) a short, stooping, hollow pale-cheeked, and sunken grey-eyed man, after watching their departure with an ill suppressed scowl, turned sharply round to Ulf and striking him with the lower end of his spear-staff, said ;—" Now ceorl, whence is he ?"— (thus addressing him in the most contumelious form, that of the third person singular.)

Ulf flushed angrily, and doubtless would have betrayed himself by answering, but Godwin promptly interposed ;—" From Wiltshire."

Aed. Who spoke to him? look he to his own business. I asked his fellow. Answer, ceorl.

And he again raised his spear-staff.

Godw. He cannot; he is dumb.

Aed. Will he speak, booby?

The spear-staff fell on Godwin's shoulder.

Godw. By my father's soul! but that—

Aed. Ah! and who is his father? Boors swear not so. What is his father?

Godwin saw the stranger, who had before beckoned to him, and who was now standing behind Aedric, raise his finger as in warning; he hesitated therefore to reply; though he certainly had not been about to tell the straightforward truth; for this seeming interest from a stranger and the caution he indicated had a different effect from what it was probably meant to have, and threw Godwin off his guard.

Aed. Answer, hind! or I will have him flung to the dogs. Answer, straight.

A murmur rose among the by-standers, and one of them said;—"Thou speakest somewhat over-harshly to the youth, methinks, Lord Streona."

Aed. Indeed! when I need thy rede, my Lord, I will ask it. (But in spite of this bravado, he was plainly cowed by the remonstrance, and put his question again in a less passionate tone.) Who is his father, I say; what is his name?

Godw. My father is a neatherd, by his calling and is named thereafter.

Aed. And lives in Wiltshire?

Godw. Aye.

Aed. And thence he is now coming?

Godw. My father?

Aed. No, fool, *himself*.

Godw. I have said so.

Aed. Aye—thou hast—(to *Ulf*.). Is he too from Wiltshire?

Godw. Have I not told thee he cannot speak.

Aed. He can *hear* though, can he not?

Godwin, who saw *Ulf* had made no sign of intelligence to *Aedric*'s question, answered boldly;—

No. He is deaf as well as dumb.

Aed. That I believe: one just *as* well as the other. (He appeared to reflect a minute.) Aye—so be it. For the now, hinds, I question you no further; we shall see though on the morrow what answer can be wrung from both of you—from the dumb as well as from the talkative; for, by my beard, I will have some reckoning how two Saxon hinds should be so far from home—and on horseback too.

Godw. We were riding to Londonbury.

Aed. I asked not now; and I again rede him to be not so flippant of speech, young man; I tell him fairly I believe not his tale—and after ye have slept apart from each other a night, I may hap to hear another guess tale on the morn. Let them be well warded and apart.—Who eats with the King to-night?

And turning superciliously on his heel, he left the spot followed by nearly all the bystanders; the muffled one, after another signal of warning, departing also. Godwin turned on Ulf a somewhat beseeching glance, meant to convey his hope that the latter would firmly bear out the tale he told for him; and this glance was seemingly understood, and answered by a slight bend of the head. In another minute they were being conveyed away by the guards, each to a different part of the camp. Ulf we will leave for a time.

Godwin's place of confinement was a small tent of coarse canvass, with no other accommodation in it than what the natural soil afforded—this however, as the weather was mild and dry, and the spot protected by the awning

from the heavy dews, gave Godwin little concern. Bread and water were put before him ; and he was asked to eat, but declined ; his hands and feet were then bound with cords, his knife taken from him, his person searched to see if he had any other weapon concealed ; and then, with an admonition to keep still, he was left alone.

But although Godwin might be as indifferent as to his present accommodation, as it was itself, yet he certainly was by no means so as to the results of the next day's investigation ; for though he had no reason to doubt his companion's fidelity, and the more especially as any betrayal on the Dane's part would quite as much, if not more, affect himself ; still he could not but fear lest the ingenuity or threats of Streona might cause a discovery, the effects of which he thought, from the specimen he had had of his great-uncle's temper, he might easily anticipate. Nay, Godwin more doubted his own strength and firmness than Ulf's ; and it was not till after frequent self-representations of what the consequences would surely be to his friend,

that he could repel the notion of demanding an interview with King Edmund, and at once avow his name and rank as a Saxon Thane. But independent of the absolute selfishness of such a scheme, there were other objections to it, which perhaps had some weight in determining Godwin not to adopt it. He could not blind himself to the clear difficulty there would be in obtaining an interview with the King, unless by chance; he could not but be aware that even then there would be the strongest likelihood of disbelief attaching to his tale; and from what his father had told him he was thoroughly convinced that in that case, the only one who might probably credit it—his great-uncle Streona—would be, in appearance, his most strenuous disbeliever; that he might have an opportunity of getting rid of him, in the character of an impostor. Who his unknown and speechless monitor might be, he could not conceive: he was sure it could not be his father for many reasons—(for that idea had naturally occurred to him)—the principle of which, besides his declared intention of going at once to his friends in

London, was the improbability that he should venture into the English camp, at a time when his kinsman and bitterest foe was plainly in full power. Abandoning therefore this idea, but not the hope that this person, whoever he might be, who had thus shewn a wish, might also have the means to befriend him, he began nevertheless to think if somehow he might not contrive the means of his own escape. This was rather what Lady Macbeth would have called, "a foolish thought," seeing that Godwin's honour, had he been able to effect his own escape, would have stood very nearly in the same predicament with regard to Ulf, as it would have done had he ensured his safety by the means he had before proposed; besides which, bound as he was, hand and foot, the chances of his flight, even could he get out of the tent, were about as poor as they possibly could be. Still urged by the seemingly innate hatred of confinement that is in man's heart, he was bent on making a trial.

His meditations, which had lasted for nearly two hours, had been but once interrupted by

his warder, who had then merely put his head in at the opening of the tent, and bade him sleep well; to which salutation Godwin, very ungraciously, had made no reply. Previously to this he had heard the sound of voices, talking and laughing together, at no great distance; and had seen through the canvass of the tent, on one side of the entrance the glow as of a large watch-fire, which, gradually strengthening as the night became darker, and occasionally intercepted by the huge and gaunt shadows of armed men, had now died away into darkness, as had also the voices into silence—yet neither complete—for through a rent in the canvass over-head the full moon shot down a beam, strong enough, by its reflection, to render visible the whole of the inside of the tent—and from without he plainly heard the measured tread of his sentinel, from time to time accompanied by a low unvarying chaunt of some such a fragment of Saxon song as follows:—

How I long for the lovely
Upbreaking of light—
The bringer of beauty—

The bearer of brightness—
The breather of sweetness—
The stirrer of song—
The merry-eyed morning,
That now plays the micher,
And slothfully sleeps
On the slope of the sky ;—
The up-waker of war—
And the lightning of weapons :
Then should we fearlessly
Follow to fight,
With a sureness of winning—
For who could withstand us ?—
Him of the Iron-side—
Imp of our island—
Eadmond of Eangeland's
Eorls the King—
Of our laymen the leader—
The lord of our land—
The herald of winning—
The hewer of helmets—
The splitter of shields—
The splinterer of swords :
Him will we follow—
The feller of foemen—
The manful—the mighty—
The giver of might :
Oh ! why doth the dawning

So drowsily linger ?
Or why do we wait
For the waning of night ?

At last the song ceased, and with it the sentry's march. Godwin now set earnestly to work to free himself from his captivity. He tried with all his force to burst the bonds—he strained till the tightened cords cut and drew blood from his wrists and ankles—till he was forced, from the very pain, to give up the useless experiment. He next endeavoured, by bending his feet up backwards, to reach with them to his hands, and so to loosen the knot ; herein he partly succeeded : for after several contorsions made at the imminent risk of disarranging his spinal column, he managed to slip off one fold of the bandage round his feet so as to be able to move them about three inches from one another ; but no further progress could he make in his work of self-emancipation, and what he had done was evidently but of little avail, for even should he succeed in escaping unseen from the tent and the camp, he could only hope to shuffle away at the rate of a quarter a mile an hour at

the uttermost; still he would not despair, but, as well as he could manage, crept and crawled along, much after the fashion of a wounded snake to the entrance of the tent. Cautiously lifting up the lower part of the hanging he saw at one glance that all hope of 'escape in that quarter was utterly out of the question; for not only did the moonshine gleam so clearly and uninterruptedly on the space in front of the tent as to render it impossible for any body to move unseen across it, if there should happen to be watchers; but also this latter fact was put out of all doubt, as not ten yards before him stood his warder, leaning on his spear, and seemingly looking with a fixed gaze at the very spot where Godwin lay crouching; indeed this latter conjecture seemed more than probable, for even as Godwin, like a fascinated bird, kept moveless with his eye on the soldier, the latter started from his post, and with a rapid stride advanced towards the tent. This at once broke the charm—if there was one—and Godwin, with what haste he could, drew back into the tent, and rolled himself together as if asleep.

Hardly had he assumed this position before the soldier drew the hanging aside, and cried out ;—

Hey there ! Rapling !

Godwin answered him with a hearty snore, which considering it was his first attempt, was a very good imitation.

What ! sleeping ? hm ! must ha' been the wind then.

And the soldier left the tent and resumed his march and song.

When these were again finished, Godwin recommenced his researches. This time he managed to rise on his feet, and contrived to shuffle round the tent, every where trying if in any spot he could raise the bottom of the hangings from the ground, and so creep out at the back of the tent, where it was in shade — but the tent had been too well and securely pegged down, and the exertions he could make to loosen the pegs, were necessarily so weak as to be quite unavailing, for if he exerted himself he was sure to tumble down ; which besides being an awkward action for a romance-writer to tell

of—almost as bad as a lover eating — was moreover unpleasant to our hero ; who finally salving his conscience with the reflection that he had done all in his power to get away, resolved to await the issue of the coming day calmly and bravely ; and making himself as comfortable a bed with his cloak as he could, betook himself to sleep in down-right earnest.

Just as he was falling off into his first doze, and his brain was floating in a delightful dreamy confusion of thoughts and things, he was woke up by a sudden sound, something like the twang of a bow-string, close to him. He opened his eyes and listened—but hearing no further noise, his senses, satisfied with the proof of watchfulness they had exhibited, again consigned themselves to lethargy. But the noise was presently repeated, though not quite the same as before—it was now sharper and shriller and—in Godwin's mind—comparable to nothing. He started up—leaned upon his elbow—fixed his eyes in the direction, whence the sound came, (which was behind him, opposite to the entrance)—and listened as intently as his now thickly-beating heart would let him. After a short pause the noise

was repeated—and this time, as the narrow moon-beam was on the spot, whereto his attention was directed, he plainly *saw* something bright flash downward, and almost disappear in the darkness beneath—but his eye having followed its track, he still could perceive it glimmer—and now remaining stationary: his first feeling was that of awe, all but mounting to fear—for Godwin's mind of course shared the age's unmanning belief in the supernatural, to the agency whereof every unusual or unknown occurrence was blindly attributed:—and this feeling was so overpowering, that he could not break the spell of silence which was on his tongue—although he wished to do so: he still listened however, and to his encreasing astonishment heard his own name uttered; but in so slight a whisper, that it might almost have seemed as if the gentle night-wind, which from time to time was heard faintly sighing past, had gained the faculty of human speech, though not any greater strength to employ it. Godwin lay paralysed; but on his name being repeated in the same tone, his tongue suddenly loosened

—he cried out aloud—“Who there?”—strove to spring up, and fell, not without great noise.—Utter silence followed.

After a pause—Godwin repeated his question, though in a more cautious tone;—and it was answered by a low and lengthened—“Sh!”

“Who there then?”

“Sh!—Art thou alone?”—asked the Breath.

“Aye—who is it?”

“Sh!—keep still.”

And the noise, that had before startled him, was reiterated; and Godwin could now clearly perceive it arose from the ripping of the tent’s canvass by some sharp instrument.

He waited silently, until his invisible visitor had finished his work, which consisted in cutting a perpendicular opening nearly man-high down to the ground. This done the opening was drawn on one side—a just distinguishable head was introduced, which said—still in the same whisper:—“Now—come—quick—but still.”

Godw. I cannot stir—I am bound.

....“Sh!....Here!”

And a dagger was pitched within a few

inches of Godwin, its blade sticking half way in the soil.

Godw. It helps nought. My hands are thonged behind.

The figure stept completely into the tent—(Godwin could only see that it was darkly robed)—stooped—picked up the dagger, and searched for the manacles on Godwin's wrists.

The latter could hardly doubt that his visitor's intentions were friendly—still the man had a naked dagger in his hand—and he himself was defenceless and bound—so he could not help saying ;—"Stop, who is it?"

...."Sh!...Wait!" Was the only answer.

In less than a minute Godwin's hands were free. The stranger then put the weapon into them, and he himself cut the cord that fettered him.

"Now. Follow!"

Godwin obeyed. Slowly and cautiously they stole out at the back of the tent, and stopt a minute to look around them. The spot whereon they actually stood was in isolated shade, thrown from the tent, but all immediately

around them was bright moonlight: several paces to their left indeed a broken line of shade was formed, by a long row of tents, and to that quarter the stranger directed Godwin's attention; directly after adding his mysterious "‘sh!"—as he pointed rightward to a soldier on his watch, who was pacing within a spear's length, and straight towards them. Godwin's first impulse was to shrink back into the tent, but the stranger caught his wrist, and held him with the grasp of a giant. Godwin now, for the first time, caught a decided view of his companion's features, and could not refrain from uttering above a whisper—"Father!"

Ulfnoth merely tightened his grasp and shook his son's arm; with the other hand again pointing to the sentry, (who at that very moment was turning back on his beat;) and then whispering: "Now"—he darted across the interjacent space of moonshine—never all the while relinquishing his hold of his son—and arrived with him in safety at the nearest station of shade.

Here they paused a little, in almost breath-

less silence, till the sentry had gained the further point of his beat—had marched the whole length facing them—and had again turned his back. Then they made another excursion, and taking a slight bend leftwards, got out of the sentinels' ken. They proceeded warily along the line of shade, which Godwin found was even more broken than it had seemed to be at a distance; for not only was the shadow itself jagged and indented, as thrown by the pyramidical tent-tops—(so that they were often forced to creep on all fours close to the tents, in order to avoid the light as much as possible;)—but there were likewise every here and there intermittent spaces of light, similar to the one they had first passed, though none of such breadth. On the verge of one of these, which they were just about to launch into, Godwin seized hold of his father's cloak, and held him back; for the young man's eye, now accustomed to the scene and nerved by daring, was quicker of sight than his father's and had caught a glitter underneath a large tree at some distance from them; and Godwin thought this

probably proceeded from the arms of some other sentinel. A moment proved he was right, for a soldier advanced from under the tree and, glancing first at the moon, turned towards the east.

Ulfnoth whispered to his son—"A wonder how I passed him before:"—And while he was deliberating whether he should venture to take advantage of the man's situation, as his back was nearly turned towards them, the chance was put an end to by the soldier turning round—advancing a few steps towards them—and then striking the head of his short spear into the ground, crossing his arms, and resting them on the butt-end; thereby settling himself into perhaps a very convenient position for himself, but certainly a very inconvenient one for the father and son, as his face was turned almost straight to the spot, where they were.

After a little thought, and a shrug of his own shoulders, Ulfnoth gently tapped one of his son's, with another warning.... "sh!".... and then lay himself down and crept to the edge of the shade; whence he slowly thrust out his head a little, so as to get a view of the

moon, to see what hopes he could gather from the looks of the sky. The prospect was as gloomy as he could have wished for. A huge sea of clouds was rising from the south, threatening to overwhelm the island moon: Ulfnoth therefore drew back, and anxiously waited the approach of this deluge of darkness. It came—the shade on which they stood seemed to dilate and expand over the surrounding light—which as yet however was but dimmed. Ulfnoth waited for the general darkness, when—instead of that—the shadow subsided—the light returned—as fully and brilliantly as before.

Still Ulfnoth waited. This had only been a thin forerunner, he thought, of the thick mass he had seen:—but it seemed he was mistaken—for the moonlight continued clear and unclouded. After quickly withdrawing his tongue from his palate — (the only way of expressing this universal signal of disappointment)—Ulfnoth again stooped and crept to his former position, much wondering what the devil had come across the clouds, that they had not yet gone across the

moon. On looking out however all his doubts on this head were soon cleared up ; for he saw that the mass he had before observed had passed by, below the satellite—therefore of course without obscuring it—and the receding edges of the cloud were already losing the bright silver gleam they had stolen from the moon in passing.

“Curse him”—said Ulfnoth, meaning the moon, according to his Saxon notion of that luminary’s gender ; which exclamation, even if grammatical, was certainly not prudent, as it was uttered in a louder tone than, all things considered, was in any way adviseable.

Godwin stooped down and touched his father, who thinking his son meant thereby to reprimand him, was naturally angry with him ; first, because it was a liberty ; and secondly, because he knew he deserved a reprimand : he was quite wrong, however, as to his son’s intentions, for Godwin had merely wished to draw his father’s attention to the fact that the sentinel had moved from his position, and was in fact coming—though slowly—straight towards them ; as if he had a mind

to take up his station on the very spot they occupied : if he had however, he changed it before he got there, and turning back, gave our two friends an opportunity they did not this time let slip.

They passed safely over the dangerous ground, and after a little more incidental creeping and crawling, arrived at the outskirts of the camp, adjoining a low coppice of brushwood, which ran down the side of a tolerably steep descent.

“God be thanked ! we are safe,”—said Ulfnoth ; to which pious thanksgiving he immediately added—“and the devil fetch the moon for darkening his light at the only time we needed it.”

For the gathering clouds had now suddenly swept up across the sky, and it was all thorough darkness. Godwin and his father proceeded nevertheless as quickly as they could, the latter leading the way, and the former following his footsteps and his example of silence—for though he burned to ask some questions of his father, he knew it

would be of no use to do so till his parent himself should begin the conversation.

After descending to the bottom of the hill, they ascended another, not so high or so steep; and while on the top of this, the clouds broke asunder and the moon shone in full strength through the gap. Ulfnoth turned and looked round—and so struck was he with the beauty of the moon-lit camp—standing like a silent city of ivory pyramids—that in spite of the precariousness of their situation, he could not help saying to his son,—“Look back, Godwin,—for an eye-glance.”

Godwin looked back—but even as he turned to do so, the beautiful scene was engulfed in darkness.

“Ah! no help!” observed Ulfnoth.

They descended this hill—a gentle slope merely on the other side—and as they went, Ulfnoth could not help moralizing to himself, on the instability of all sublunary things—a natural train of thought perhaps to fall into after what he had just witnessed: but as there was nothing very new in his notions

on the subject, and as Godwin was spared them, there can be no excuse for inflicting them on the reader; especially as it might prove a self-infliction on the writer.

CHAPTER VI.

ON arriving at the bottom of this slope, they crossed a small rivulet, and by the momentary outbursting of the moon, Godwin recognized the spot as the one where he and Ulf had been when they first descried the approach of the English army. The father here stopped and said :—" Now, Godwin, we are safe—but stay yet an eye-glance."

He then clapped his hands thrice together, and was answered by a whistle, close at hand : directly after a splash was heard in the water, and the trot of a horse, which was brought up to the spot by a serf.

Ulf. Well, Sweinkop;—now away again and watch.

The serf gave the reins of the horse into his master's hands and departed. As soon as he was gone, Ulfnoth turned round and embraced his son, and said:—“Dear son! this has been so far lucky—now to horse and away with what speed thou canst—for this is no safe tarrying-place for thee.”

Godw. There is but one horse, father, thou ridest with me, sure?

Ulf. No, no. I stay here.

Godw. In safety?

Ulf. Aye, I hope so. Sure I know that flight by me would bring danger and following after us both. Thine will not be worth Streona's while to hunt much after:—it will but seem likely that thou shouldst have fled, whatever thou wert—for he *knows* thee not, though he clearly *guesses* thee other than thou seemest: but our together flight should fix thee as my son; and then he would raise hue and cry after us as traitors.

Godw. I never thought it could be thou, I

saw this even, minding what thou hadst told me of that man. I should have thought thou wouldst have rather shunned him.

*Ulf*n. And so would I. It was chance brought us together; I joined the King never dreaming to find Aedric there—nor was he indeed when I first came; for at Scearston fight he had behaved him more traitorously than ever—he hewed off a Dane’s head, whose features were like Eadmund’s—and held it up in sight of the English, telling them it was their King’s, and bidding them therefore flee; which they did in great deal and should have been wholly routed, but that Eadmund took off his helm, and rode among them, and rallied them—and how could I think that after *this*—this topping deed of treachery—Aedric should ever show his face again before the Ironside? —But so it is, the snake-tongued traitor beguiles the ready son, meseems, as easily as he beguiled the unready father; — he came with some tale or other—he himself had been mistaken—I wot not what—and wot not why

I waste the worthful time in chattering here with thee, boy, when thou shouldst be on thy road :—only to think of this Aedric—he had been fighting they say that very day with Aelmar against Eadmund—and spite of all this, he is now forgiven—for that he was the King's foster-father — and has sworn to be his true man ;—and he has shaken hands with me too—I had as lief have grappled a wolf's paw—but up, up, boy,—go, and my blessing with thee.

Godw. But the Dane, father? our guest.—

Ulf. He must even shift for himself, son.

Godw. Shall that be right, dear father?

Ulf. Sometimes, Godwin, we must think of ourselves alone.

Godw. But even so, do we not by leaving the Dane, bring greater danger on ourselves? He will think himself betrayed; and what warrant have we that he will not tell who I am; and of our harbouring him?

This hypothesis seemed rather to puzzle Ulfnoth, and after a pause, he muttered to himself;—"True—quite true—farther foresight than I had"—then after a farther pause, he added:—

“So then—stay thou here—in the shade—and wait my back-coming.”

Godw. May I not with thee, father?

Ulfñ.—Surely not. Art wood?—Do as I bid thee, and keep still.—Here, hold the reins. I will do nought to endanger either of us.

Ulfnoth departed : and to Godwin’s anxious imagination seemed to tarry an unconscionable period. When his expectation began to be thoroughly wearied, his thoughts turned, as if for relief, to other subjects. Left now to himself, and the great load of doubt removed from his heart, the recollection of Aelfgiva returned thither with a power, rather strengthened by its temporary absence ; he strove to drive it away ; but could not ; his mind, being now comparatively at ease, naturally recurred to the constant idea of its easiest hours ; when he was before alone in the tent it might have seemed that the bonds upon his limbs had also shackled his soul, and tied it down only to thoughts of self and his then difficulties ; but now that he was again free, so also was his imagination, and it roamed away from his present si-

tuation—back into the regions of the past—the once sweet and flowery past, but where now he would only meet with desert misery and the waters of bitterness. He sat upon a rock and gave way to these feelings, till they forced tears to his eyes and down his cheeks—he rose ashamed of his weakness—ashamed that he himself should have witnessed it—he vowed he would return her scorn with scorn—and wished only for an opportunity of meeting her to prove it;—but the very idea of this meeting made him feel he was still her lover;—and he found himself, in fancy, kneeling at her feet. He sprung up more ashamed of this than of his tears, and regardless of his father's bidding, as reckless of the consequences of his disobedience, he walked out into the again clear moonlight,—and in a few minutes was met by Ulf and his father.

*Ulf*n. Godwin! Is this doing as I bade thee—Foolish boy, wouldst thou lose all our lives?

Godw. Dear father! forgive me; I was wandering.

Ulf. Humph! no need to tell me that.
Well!—where is the horse?

Godw. The horse? Did he bide with me?

Ulf. By St. Winfred! hast thou let him go?

Godw. I dare say he is not gone far—let us hope so.

Ulf. And how shall we find him—*chosen* as he was of a dark hue—an he keep in the shade;—and an he *be* gone....

Ulf. We must foot it friend Gudin—that's the worst.

Ulf. Is it the worst, good Dane? thou speakest easy, for whose safety two Saxon Aethels have forgone their own.

Ulf. Well, no need to squabble, name-sake; for methinks yonder stands the wight steed,—to be seen, though not a white one—very meekly grazing.

Ulf. Where?—oh—aye—I see—so—soh—whew! whew! boy!

Ulfnoth luckily succeeded in capturing the horse, and having done so he said;—“Now, to horse without further loss of time—ye must ride two-fold—and with what speed

ye can ; for we, *may* have been marked. Ulf, ride straight for Lundene — keep from towns as much as may be — ye will find the Danish host somewhere in the neighbourhood. Godwin, we shall meet again. Farewell to both.

Having both mounted on the horse Ulf and Godwin rode slowly off, till they came to the entrance of the glen again, (for they retraced their morning's course,) and then at full speed across the country, Godwin's knowledge of the stars assisting them as to what route to pursue.

They did not slacken their speed till the first grey streaks of morning assured them they had ridden far and fast enough to be safe from all pursuit, and then Ulf related the particulars of his escape, which it seemed had not been so easy as Godwin's, for a guard had slept in the tent with him, while another kept watch without:—that he himself, having been awake, had first been aware of Ulfnoth's endeavour to effect his escape (attempted in the same manner that Godwin's had been ;)—that he had at once, and without

any intervening superstition, comprehended the design ; but that the noise had woke up the guard also, who luckily at once began asking questions as if in order to let his friendly visitor know of his danger ;—that after a time the guard slept again, and that then he had crept to the side of the tent, whispered the fact to the person without, who then thrust in the dagger through the opening already made,—and that with the weapon he contrived first to cut his own manacles, and then to stab the sleeping man.

“I liked not the deed—(said Ulf)—but need drove me to it ; for I thought I could not escape but by cutting through the tent, and that should surely wake him—it was to be his life or mine, I saw—so I chose the latter ; and thinking it were not much other than as though he stood ready with weapon to take my life,—I saved it by taking his.—Well—this done—I could not help it, thou seest,—I cut my feet free—and then stole on tip-toe to the outlet of the tent, where all was dark as dark—and still as still—so I thought mayhap the other guard was

sleeping too, and that 'twould be grief to wake him by making a noise in ripping the canvass, so I stole stilly out, and stumbled straight against some one who was walking towards me—how I came not to hear him I know not—however I drove my weapon clean into his breast—and somewhat hastily—for I never stopped to ask whether he was friend or foe....”

Godw. Good God! my father!

Ulf. Aye—it might have been he sure enough; but it was not thou knowest, for thou sawest him since, hale and hearty—it was the guard, I take it, for I never stopped to ask; but away with thy father, who heard the fall and then just joined me—and here I am:—and yonder I see is a Thorp, where I think we may safely dare both to seek for food, and for another horse. And so, as I have had talk enough, I shall be dumb again.

CHAPTER VII.

THEY succeeded in obtaining what they wanted ; and as their subsequent journey presented no further incident worthy of remark, it may without any further circumlocution be added, that they arrived safely at the Danish camp, then pitched before the very walls of London, whose inhabitants still held out in the hope that their King would hasten to their relief.

They arrived in sight of the camp early in the morning, and having fastened their horses to a tree—proceeded quietly and unchallenged towards the camp, which they in like manner entered ; for the Saxon peasantry

of the neighbourhood were either so friendly to—or so frightened at—the Danes, that they were treated with the most marked and condescending contempt, and allowed to wander about the camp wherever they chose, no further notice being taken of them than if they had been so many hounds, who were driven away with cuffs and kicks just as the humour crossed their masters. Godwin's heart sickened within him, and his face flushed with wrath, as he saw one of his countrymen thus driven a few paces length from him by three or four Danish soldiers, who with stones and staves were pelting and beating him, seemingly not more to their own amusement than to that of the idle spectators around, Saxons as well as Danes. An angry exclamation even rose on Godwin's lips; but Ulf twitched him by his skirt, and laying his finger on his own lips whispered, "Beware!"

They continued their progress and approached a tent of larger size and more splendid appearance than any at least of those that were within their sight; in shape it was rather square than pyramidical; its texture was of some glossy

substance—apparently silk—and its colours twofold, of broad alternate waves of green and white. As they came nearer to this tent, a soldier on guard stepped forward, and stretching his halbart across their way, said gruffly :

Back, Churls ! what want ye here ? (then immediately changing his tone) My lord Iarl ! I crave your forgiveness.

Ulf. (Smiling and nodding to the man) ; Hast it Haco ; ask a better boon the next time, and it shall hardly be withheld thee : (then turning to Godwin)—that man saved my life at Searston.

They passed on towards the entrance of the tent, where the hangings were drawn partly aside, and looped up with green silken ropes ; on the right hand of this gang-way, as they were about to enter, stood a low thorn, tangled in the intricate twigs of which was a large bumble-bee, buzzing and beating about the bush to try and escape from it : this incident was considered an omen among the Saxon peasantry, or rather as a ground on which an omen might at the will of the spectator be erected ; for they held that whatever wish he should frame

at such a time would certainly not fail ; Godwin, when — similar occasions offered themselves had been in the constant habit of framing the only wish which his simple life had rendered likely to occur to him—namely that he might be united with Aelfgiva—and this had in truth become so much a habit that even now the wish rose spontaneously and instinctively the uppermost in his heart—he stopped it however ere it reached perfect birth, and inwardly wished—“ May I forget her !”

They entered the tent, and were met by another guard, who however immediately made way for them on Ulf’s announcing his name, in a low voice, he then added, “ All within ?”

The guard bowed ; they passed on, and Ulf raising the hanging cautiously with one hand, they stood within the inner tent. A glance of less than a minute showed Godwin what it will take much longer to describe.

To his left, seated on a cross-legged and richly carved oaken settle, something in shape

like a modern camp-stool, before a round table, of the same wood, was a young man, of a beauty and fairness, that would have been absolutely effeminate but for the largeness of his features and stature—the strength that the latter showed—and the deep thought that was inherent in the former. His nose was thin, high and eagle-beaked in shape : his hair, of a lighter auburn than Godwin's, hung in profuse clusters down his back and shoulders, and sparkled as though it were sprinkled with gold dust. Around his head he wore a bandeau of large pearls sewed on a strip of crimson velvet, fastened behind with two gold strings, with a pearl also at the end of each ; from this band hung over either ear a Greek cross of gold : he also had a necklace of pearls, and *beahs* or wristlets of the same, and likewise a bracelet above the elbow of the right arm made of a broad band of gold set with various precious stones ; his under tunic was of yellow silk, long sleeved and setting loosely on the body ; over this he wore a full crimson cloth mantle, woven

with ravens, of the natural colour—nearly of the natural size—and in the attitude that heralds term *mantling*:—this outer dress was fastened in front with a large emerald and fell back over both shoulders. The individual thus sumptuously arrayed seemed busily employed in studying a map, painted on a large roll of vellum, in which study he was assisted, or accompanied, by an old grey-headed man, who stood behind his chair, simply dressed in a long flowing robe of purple cloth, with long loose sleeves, and fitting closely to his neck. Behind the youth's seat in a corner stood a long thick brass rod, on the top of which was perched another mantling raven; and so well had the look of life been preserved in the stuffed bird, that Godwin was fairly cheated by its glossy plumage and glistening eyes, and expected that the next moment its expanding wings would bear it from the roost, which it appeared just about to leave.

To the Saxon's right another groupe caught his eye; two ladies were sitting on ivory settles on either side of a small ebony table cu-

riously inlaid with silver; they were playing together the game of *Tæfl*, or tables, which, with some subsequent modifications, was afterwards called *The Ladies' game*—and now, (perhaps from having become a favourite in pot-houses,) obtains with us the less elegant title of *Draughts*: the back of one of these ladies was turned to Godwin, so that he could only see that her long unbanded hair was quite black, and one of her arms very white—and that she wore a very handsome violet-coloured mantle of silk, adorned with embroidered leaves and flowers: the other lady who sat almost fronting him, seemed so busily bent over her game, that Godwin could but discern that the colour of her hair, which was most elaborately dressed and adorned with very many gems, and the general outline of her features bore a strong resemblance to those of the youth, who was studying geography:—her apparel was equally splendid and tasteful; but before Godwin had time to note its details an incident and conversation took place, which perhaps it will be more to the tale-writer's business to record at once, than to waste his

own and the reader's time by any longer dwelling in this somewhat *La belle Assemblée* style, on the fashionable morning costume of nine centuries ago.

The fair-haired lady sighed. The other lady laughed; and said;—"Oh sister! would I sigh for the loss of a man!"

The former lady looked up, with a flushed face, a frowning brow, and eyes, whose bright blue flashed fire even through a gathering cloud of tears.

The black-haired lady answered this look immediately with:—"Nay, my darling Adrida, think not I meant *him*."

While this was uttering, Adrida had started back; and now with a changed countenance, yet more flushed in hue, but lighter in aspect, she leaped up, crying out—"Mighty Freya! there he is!"

And she now sprung forward, flung her arms round Ulf's neck—kissed his lips often and long—then looked in his face as if to be certain she was not mistaken—then turned pale—and then hid her face in his breast and burst out crying.

This outcry and action—all passing as quick as lightning,—caused a great stir in the tent.

The other lady rose and came forward—not without overturning her settle—and said—“Oh Ulf! how glad I am to see thee—but I shall scold thee well for thy long tarrying—come, come, sisterling, eat him not all up with kisses.”

And the lady addressed did indeed stint her appetite, however disinclined thereto; for having met Godwin’s eye, she blushed again; disengaged her arms from the Dane’s neck, and drew back.

The other lady without loss of time occupied her place; and the Saxon swain, unlike Virgil’s, certainly must have envied, as well as wondered at, his new acquaintance’s good fortune—it is very probable though that he did not observe that the salute of the latter lady came not quite in such a volley as had that of the former.

In the mean-while the pearl-diademed youth had also advanced and said;—“Well, Ulf; I greet thee: I began to fear for thee.”

Ulf. What shame should I not take to myself, who have made my King feel fear?

“Tut, brother,” answered the as yet nameless King,—(for I wish the reader to be just in Godwin’s state of ignorance)—“tut; there be more than one kind of fear.”

“How knows the King that?” asked the dark-haired lady, with an arch smile.

“By hearsay:” answered Adrida.

“I thank thee, sister:” said the youth; and then again turning to Ulf—“and where gatst thou this churlish gear?—and who is yon? should I know his face?”

Ulf. A Saxon.

“—What!” exclaimed the other impetuously—“bring a Saxon Ceorl before King Knute!—Stay—stay—stay: I wronged thee, and him; I see; he hath done thee some good turn sure.”

Ulf. Nothing but saved my life.—

Knute. Nothing *but*?—hm!—well; ‘*thou* mayst play off a jeer on thy brother, Ulf:—but it were as well not done before a stranger, methinks,—even though he be a Saxon herdsman. Young man, thou art welcome. I thank thee for saving us a friend. Adrida wilt thou not thank him too?

The first part of this short royal speech was uttered angrily; the middle part solemnly; and the latter part dignifiedly. The young Danish King then turned on his heel, and joined his elderly companion at the table, who seemed quite disconcerted at all that had been taking place.

Adrida did as she was bade—she came forward and thanked Godwin, with dignity, but with a cordiality, that deprived it of all stiffness:—the other lady also thanked him—it seemed to Godwin though, with more of dignity than of cordiality—that is to say with some stiffness—she said—“The sister of Ulf is no less thankful for his safety than is his wife.”

This great difference of relationship might perhaps explain this slight difference in their demeanour to the young Saxon;—but if it be fair to guess at the workings of the female heart—it might be presumed that the wife felt gratitude to her husband’s preserver, unalloyed by any consideration of his lowly rank; while that consideration did perhaps a little weigh with the sister, who saw in Godwin, but what her brother-in-law had at first seen—a

Saxon churl — of all creatures the most despicable in the eyes of a noble Danish maiden.

To both these addresses Godwin had replied by gently bending his head forward and blushing immoderately — as for speaking it was clearly out of the question.

Ulf remarked his silence and said ; — “ Ah ! friend, thou’lt find a tongue anon — and then added in a lower voice — “ and some one else perhaps a kindlier one.”

Adrida, who had not heard this latter sentence, (as in truth it was not meant she should) again took up the speech, as at the same time she twined her arm fondly within her husband’s ; — “ Thou must tell us, Ulf, of all thy wanderings.”

“ Not yet, sister,” said Knute, coming forward, all trace of anger gone from his fair face — “ not yet — let our poor brother have a little rest before we lay so heavy a toil on him.”

“ Thou forgettest, my Lord,” said the other lady, “ that my sister must needs be sore eager to hear of her husband’s wanderings.”

Adrida blushed — frowned — and then smiled

and raising her finger to her lips merely said—
“Fie, on thee, Goda!”

Goda. Fie, for what, sister?—art thou not anxious?

Adr. Not as thou meanest, Goda.

Goda. Then fie on *thee*, Adrida: and so thy wife caring so little about thee, brother, thou mayest do well to hearken to our kingly brother’s rede, and go to rest a bit.

Ulf. With many thanks to you all I had liefer eat a bit—seeing that my fast is yet whole; and I guess my friend is not less hungered than myself.

Knute. Out on thee, man; why spakest not before? within there!

Ulf. Nay, my Lord, let us rather first go wash and don other gear, as I have been somewhat overlong in this: moreover I wish to clothe my Saxon saviour in a dress somewhat more becoming him.

Knute looked first at Godwin—then at Ulf: Goda looked first at Ulf, and then at Godwin; while Adrida seemed well contented with never taking her eyes off her husband’s face; who smiled—perhaps at her—perhaps at the other

two—perhaps at nothing at all: he said, however: “Come, Gudin, hast thou any thing against this plan?”

Godwin said—nothing; which, if he had said anything, would probably have been his answer; but he bowed, which meant as much; and Ulf having shaken hands with the King and kissed his wife and sister, said to them;—“Farewell, then for the while:” and he and Godwin left the tent.

As they were crossing the sort of passage, between the inner and outer hangings, another female passed them a few paces off; she was entering the inner tent by another opening, and the two young men caught only a very transient glance at her face and figure.

“Who the Devil can that be?” muttered Ulf.

And Godwin answered: “I’m sure I can’t tell.”

This struck Ulf as being rather odd, because, of course, the Saxon *could* know nothing about the matter; but it had somehow occurred to Godwin that, except the female was clad in splendid apparel, she looked, as far as he

could judge by the hasty glimpse he had had of her, uncommonly like Aelfgiva; but the moment this idea had crossed him, its palpable absurdity had also been manifest, so that he made an unintended answer to Ulf's equally unexpected question.

CHAPTER VIII.

THEY passed on chatting of one thing or another, till they arrived at Ulf's tent, where I shall detain them and the reader only just so long as to inform the latter that they both shifted their dress; Ulf putting on a plain tunic and mantle of green cloth; while to Godwin he assigned a splendid suit of blue steel mail, the links of which were so small and fine that the armour yielded to the movement of every limb, and yet, according to Ulf's description, so craftily were they wrought that neither sword-edge, nor spear-head, though driven with the utmost violence could do more than slightly bruise the wearer.

Thus accoutred they returned to the royal tent, where a table had been hastily, but plen-

tifully spread with all the luxuries of the season. At their entrance the party had been augmented by the strange lady they had observed on quitting the tent; with whom the King seemed in earnest conversation in a corner, for he was talking, though in a low voice, very vehemently, while she was casting down her eyes, and looking not a little red in the face: this made Ulf turn round to his companion, with the intention of saying;—‘Oho! I see what’s in the wind’—he changed his mind however, before he formed his phrase, and said instead;—“Why, what ails thee; man?”—for the young Saxon’s face was absolutely green, and the expression of it ghastly and terrific, as though he had seen a terrible and unexpected vision. In fact, he saw Aelfgiva herself.

He was so struck by the sight of her, that he heard not his friend’s question; which however had been uttered so loudly as to call the attention of all the others in the tent; the natural movement that they made recalled Godwin to his senses; he drew himself up to his full height, and then bowed himself

gracefully forward, with a smile on his still haggard and quivering lips.

Ulf, seeing him thus restored, and surmising his agitation to have arisen from some transient pain, said ;—" I beg to bring before King Knute a young Seaxon Aethel, by name Gudin, the son of Ulfnoth, once Childe of the South-Seaxons."

Every one present showed astonishment at this announcement, even the old long-bearded geographer ; Ulf's sister blushed, and her black eyes sparkled beautifully ; Aelfgiva had opened her large blue ones, with an expression of exceeding astonishment, when she heard the name, and she opened them still wider when she looked on and plainly recognized Godwin, who turned not his gaze from her ; and Knute, said ;—" Ah ! sayest thou ?—in sooth now, brother Ulf ?"

Ulf. In sooth and truth. Should I dare speak other to my King ?

Knute. But thou art fond of a jeer, brother ; as that speech and smile something betoken : but they shall not anger me. But come, this

is well: methought my brother Ulf would not have owned his safety to a Seaxon Ceorl.

Ulf. In troth though brother, Ulf would not have been nice on that head.

The King either did not hear, or did not think fit to notice this reply, but advancing to Godwin, he extended his hand, and kindly said;—"We thank thee, young Seaxon, and with more heart now than before, for we think no shame to speak thanks to a Seaxon, even though he should be a foe, which we will yet hope not to find thee."

Godwin, (still gazing on Aelfgiva, who had dropped her eyes, as if oppressed by his fixed stare,—as perhaps she was—) took no notice whatever of the King's speech, gracious as it was, (and all Kings' speeches always are so—) and therefore the King drew himself up into a posture of offended dignity, and said to Ulf—

"Is the Seaxon Aethel asleep?"

Ulf answered: "No, not yet, my Lord:—" for he happened to be whispering to his wife—it does not much matter what about—when the King spoke to him, and had somehow

or other misunderstood what was said to him.

Knute. Now! are ye both mad?

Ulf. What is it, my Lord?—Why, Gudín, the King was speaking to thee.

Godw. Indeed?—I crave—I am sure—no—the King spake not to me.

Knute. By the head of Odin! but he did though, young man; and moreover he is not wont to speak twice on one thing: but I believe thy brain was whirling some other where, so no more need be said about it. I bade thee my hand.

Godw. I take it, King of Danemark.

Knute. Frank and free: I like it. Here—this is a landsman of thine; knowest thou him?

Godw. No, my Lord.

Knute. No? what not know Aelfhelm, the Eorl of Northampton? methinks the Seaxon Aethels know mighty little of one another; I shall trust to make them better known.

Aelfh. If this young man be the son of Child Ulfnoth, I knew his father well: but he is dead.

Godw. My father lives—at least *he* lives, whom I have ever known as father.

Ulf. Not unwisely put in, Gudín ; for they say the most knowing bairn can never know his own father ; at least so *I* was told : however, I will warrant, my kingly brother, that Childe Ulfnoth is alive—whether he be my friend's father or no—by the token that I bear a friendly word or two from him to thee, about some things of state—the which, together with a full reckoning of how this youth most likely never met with yon elder ere now, and sundry other things of great weight,—mostly touching mine own self,—I shall lay open to your kingly ken so soon,—and, may it please you, no sooner—as I have somewhat softened down the wolf of hunger, which at this time is gnawing most mightily and mainly at my poor bowels.

Knute. Sit then ; the meal waits for thee.

Ulf. Well : it has no right to grumble ; I have waited long enough for it.

Knute. Sit at my right, fair Alfifa—thy father to my left—the rest where they will.

This little speech and its results created a world of wonders in Godwin's mind :—for first

he did not comprehend the name, by which the Danish King had addressed Aelfgiva—and he looked at her, with a start, as though he must have been previously mistaken as to her person; having concluded however that he was correct as to *her*, his second wonder was, that the individual, addressed as her father, was the identical Elder, to whom he had been introduced as Aelfhelm, Earl of Northampton; now how Aelfgiva's father could possibly be an Earl was more than he could by any means comprehend; so his second conclusion was, that he *must* have been mistaken, and that the lady he saw before him was only most supernaturally like the humble queen of his affections; just however as this argument, by its weight, was turning the balance of his doubts, an additional circumstance was thrown into the other scale, which made it at once preponderate, and (to continue this elaborate metaphor) caused all opinion as to the lady's non-identity fairly to kick the beam: for the old Earl himself addressed her by the name of his dear daughter Aelfgiva; which the King pronounced after him, adding;—"I must learn this Seaxon

utterance of thy name, Dearling, for it is prettier far than ours."

The King's invitation was accepted : they sat down to the table therefore, which being a round one, each person present had the full opportunity of seeing every other face in the circle : a much more amiable arrangement, by the way, than that of our modern long tables, at which one can only see the faces of those opposite him, or immediately to his right and left ; whereby I have often seen a jealous lover or husband, who happened to be removed two or three seats from the object of his affections, go through a deal of indecent awkwardness in the course of a meal, in order to ascertain, as far as he was able, what could possibly be her inducement, to be so unseasonably and unaccountably merry, as she seemed to be, with the stupidly handsome man, whom the malicious lady of the house had placed at her side—but whither am I wandering?—I have yet to seat our own royal party.

Aelfgiva and her father have been already disposed of ; to the right of the former sat Ulf ; and next him, his wife ; then Godwin ;

and then Goda, who sitting to the left of Aelfhelm, thus completed the little circle.

During the greater part of the meal, which was a very lengthened one, Godwin watched his former mistress with no very amiable mixture of doubt, hope, despair and jealousy—the latter fully warranted by the very unequivocal attentions which the young monarch continually paid to her, and which, according to Godwin's notions, were received with the most evidently unbecoming pleasure: she in her turn, from time to time, cast several glances at her old lover; and scarcely two of them were alike, as they originated from exceedingly different feelings; for he looked so handsome in his new costume, that she was more than half inclined to coquette with him; despite her own newly invented dignity, and the royal patent for it, which she was not without hopes of obtaining—but then she remembered these things were not of every day's occurrence, and therefore not to be rashly sacrificed—and with this thought, the old scorn returned to her beautiful face; the same she had formerly felt for Godwin, when she only knew from her mo-

ther's account, that she was descended of a noble race, though without any hope of joining it again : then, there were all possible variations of wonder at the tale which Ulf, true to his word, related of his first meeting with the Saxon, and of all he had subsequently heard, done and suffered : nor would it be justice to her to omit a feeling of excessive annoyance, when she saw at length, that the King's laughing and black-eyed sister-in-law had succeeded in bantering Godwin into conversation, the subject of which, indicated by more than one downright shout of laughter, Aelfgiva gave herself infinitely futile pains to discover ; so that in a quarter of an hour from the first laugh that passed between them, she thoroughly hated the merry-hearted Dane, and indeed took occasion in the course of the morning to whisper to the King, that she could not bear people with black hair, and for her part believed that Ulf and his sister were very strange folk—at which the King smiled, and answered : “ Very likely ! ”

The topic of conversation changed by degrees to the politics of the day ; and herein the

ladies joined as little, or with as little success, as they have ever done, on such subjects, from before that day to this: Godwin was at first very little interested in what was going on, and evidently preferred chatting in an undertone with his right-hand neighbour—but she at last fairly told him to hold his tongue, and listen; and with a feeling of chivalry, known to all men of all ages—(at least to all men of a youthful age)—he bowed and obeyed.

To his own surprise, the theme of the general conversation was much more interesting to him than he could have anticipated it would have been—and he soon became so absorbed in it as completely to lose all thoughts of other things, even of those very black bright eyes, the rays of which had been for the last half hour evolving a considerable quantity of caloric from his pericardium. He was astonished to find how intensely ignorant a man might be of the state of the country in which he dwelt—(in this year of grace, 1832, such blissful ignorance is not confined to shepherds) nor—was he less astonished at the intimate knowledge which strangers displayed on

the subject. Knute and his brother-in-law were plainly well acquainted—not only with the face of the land,—but with many of the Saxon chieftains also, who from time to time had either openly or secretly abandoned their own King, to side with the adventurous Dane—among the former class, it was clear Godwin might enumerate his new old friend with a long beard, who expressed it as his opinion that if a decisive blow were not soon struck, the English Lords would return to their allegiance, now that they had a King, who knew how to govern.

“Aye—and to fight too”—interrupted Knute —“that can he right well: how the unready Ethelred ever begat so ready a son is to me a wonderment: had he been born in wedlock, I should never have believed that his mother’s husband was his father. Howbeit methinks we need not fear much of back-sliding on the part of the English Earls, while their King is as mighty a fool as his father on one head—and will put faith and trust in his most trusty and faithful follower Aedric Streona—who in sooth is the greatest knave, that. . . .

Aelfh. Perhaps thou knowest not, King, that Aedric is of kin to yonder youth.—

Knute blushed and looked foolish; thinking he had said something to the same effect; and Ulf said;

“Oh! that does nothing:—never stickle for Gudin’s being here, at speaking ill of his kinsman Aedric, I know all about that.”

Somehow Godwin felt angry at all this—in fact his vanity was again a little hurt; for he thought he was being treated too much as a boy, whose actions were about to be disposed of by others, with some reference indeed to his feelings, but with none to his will; so he thought he would show he had an opinion of his own upon things in general—made two or three exceedingly absurd and unseasonable observations—was laughed at by Goda—and after that, with great dignity and prudence, held his tongue.

The discussion mainly turned upon the point whether, or not, it was advisable to make another attack upon the city of London, in the hopes of effecting an entrance, before King Edmund could arrive to raise the siege; or at once to

march forward in order to oppose that monarch's further progress; this latter proceeding was strenuously advised by the old Saxon noble, who contended that the city was strong enough to resist all attack for several days at least—that by such an attack, even if Edmund did not come soon upon them, the strength and number of the Danes would be necessarily much diminished; and if they succeeded they would thus be in but an ill condition to defend a city, the strong holds of which they must have obviously weakened before they could gain them; besides which the disaffection of the conquered citizens might be reckoned on, as a certainty; together with the fact, that they would take every opportunity of co-operating with their countrymen from without:—on the other hand, if they marched at once against Edmund—who probably was not far distant—the Danes would have the advantage of presenting a body of men, refreshed from fatigue, and recruited in numbers, (as they had been by the arrival of other vessels)—against those who would be wearied by a long march, and in a state of doubt as to how far their enemies had been successful

in other quarters. Ulf coincided in this view of the case; as also did one or two other chiefs, whom the King had sent for to consult with on the occasion:—but he himself remained resolute to his first opinion; that to attack—or, as he put it—to *win* the city was the point of the first importance: he could not easily give any reasons for this—except the very powerful one, that *he* considered it the best—and when he found he could not readily convince others to think so too—and that he was fairly talked out of the field,—he began to show symptoms of royal sulkiness—by frowning and thrumming with his fingers on the table—so that every body but Aelfhelm, (who did not seem to know much of him,) and Ulf, (who did not seem to care much for him,) thought it prudent,—at least to hold their tongues—and began to deliberate whether it would not be as well to change their opinions.

At this critical crisis an officer entered in great haste, and out of breath,—who stated he had ridden hard from the north-west out-posts, whence the English army had been descried marching towards the city.

Knute at this information, started up and exclaimed in a voice like a roaring wind ;—" By the thunder of Thor ! but I will win yon Burg yet—out with me, Lords !"

And seizing the sacred standard in his hand, he rushed from the tent, followed by Aelfhelm and the Danes. Ulf merely paused at the entrance, blew back a laughing kiss to the women, and then laying hold of Godwin's arm, drew him after him, saying ; " Come along, Gudin, we'll show thee some kingly sport anon."

Godwin happened to be looking back into the tent at the moment when Goda returned her brother's sufflatory kiss — and whether from vanity, or what not, he thought the fingers that wafted the greeting, waved as much towards him, as to his companion : he did not, however, think fit to return it.—

Without the tent all was bustle and noise—

“ Drums beating—trumpets braying,
Men shouting—horses neighing.”

All mingling together—and producing, on an unaccustomed mind, a sense of astonishment,

and awe at what seemed the most chaotic confusion ; and as this feeling gradually subsided with the subsiding storm, it was succeeded by one of the same nature, though of a different cast, at the order and regularity which, as by enchantment, had arisen from so much apparent disorder.—

Godwin now perceived nothing but a large body of well organized warriors—whose every movement seemed directed by one will—simultaneously impelling the whole mass—the Saxon loiterers had all, either been driven, or fled away, at the first commencement of the tumult—the horsemen were mounted—the footmen serried in their ranks—and the silence, that succeeded the previous bustle, was only occasionally interrupted by the voice of the war-trumpets, that seemed to be holding question and answer with each other from the most distant out-posts of the army.

Ulf and Godwin, having horsed themselves, joined the Danish King on an eminence near the western gate of the city ; not far from them stood the ruinous remains of what ap-

peared to have been formerly a large farming establishment—probably dilapidated in some of the numerous battles which of late years had been fought in the immediate vicinity of the metropolis; the field on which they stood was of grass—but it had been so long neglected, that weeds and underwood had extended over its surface, and given it the appearance of an uncultivated common.

Knute himself, when the two friends arrived on the spot, stood dismounted in the centre of a knot of horsemen, and was busily engaged in issuing orders and putting on his armour—a rather necessary precaution, which he had forgotten to take, in the first moments of his enthusiasm.

He nodded very graciously both to Ulf and Godwin on their arrival, and if his salute was not as elegant as the bow of some of his successors on the English throne, it may be remembered, that he was neither so refined a monarch, nor one, who deemed that sharing with the toils and pleasures of his people was incompatible with the dignity or duties of a King.

Just as he was slipping his arm through

the sleeve of a splendid hauberk, (the scales of which were alternately of gold, silver and blue steel,) a horseman was seen riding at full speed towards the group. Knute stepped out of the circle, and advanced a few paces to meet him :—the rider, as he came nearer, drew from his bosom a small scroll, which he waved above his head : he was about to pass the King, and make for the groupe of horsemen, when Knute seized the bridle of his horse, and with such a violent jerk, as not only effectually checked the beast in his full career, but caused him to wheel round so suddenly, that the hapless rider was fairly whirled out of his seat, and rolled for some yards on the ground—amid the uncontrolled laughter of the spectators, in which the King most heartily joined : the man had lost hold of the scroll in his fall, and Knute stepped forward and picked it up ; but hardly had he done so, ere the messenger had regained his feet,—and now made a rush, with the unceremonious intention of snatching the packet from the royal hands — at the same time screaming out—in Saxon ;—“ For the King ! —for King Knute !”

Knute, still laughing, gave him a good humoured push, which had nearly again brought him to the ground—and answered—“Well—fool—for me!—from Streona?”

Saxon. Aye—for King Knute.

Knute. Blockhead! — I thought so.—Here—Bocler!

The person thus addressed stepped forward from the groupe — a tall, thin, gaunt figure, with a singularly sharp pale face and beak-like nose; he was dressed in tight body-clothes of scarlet cloth, and a black mantle, reaching hardly to his knees, with a very large and full scarlet hood, which being thrown over his head, nearly enveloped his features and gave them, by contrast, an additional look of acuteness; to a broad girdle, of the same colour as his mantle, hung on the right side a large unsheathed knife by a steel chain, on the left a small leathern case, which contained an ink horn, and a few reed pens: this personage was no less than the Danish King's secretary for foreign affairs; for which important avocation he was qualified by the possession of an acquirement, not very common

in those rude days, even among men of the best education—namely that of reading and writing ; was also something of a poet, and much more of a critic,—his great talent lying in cutting up the productions of others—he was a cutter up too in another sense, being the King’s confidential carver ; and as an emblem of this latter office, he bore the large knife before mentioned.

Knute, accompanied by this man, approached the half decayed trunk of a tree, which lay a short distance from the groupe, and seemed from its appearance to have lain there for some years—having been separated from the root, which, a few yards off, had again sprouted up into a moderate sized shrub :—As the monarch, for his greater convenience in discussing his tidings, was about to seat himself on the stem, Aelfhelm, who stood speaking with Godwin, suddenly and with a look of horror exclaimed ;—“ Mother of mercy ! Look where the King is about to sit.”

Godwin accordingly looked ; as did Ulf, who also heard the exclamation ; and the latter very quietly said ;—“ Well ! will

the tree turn to a dragon and fly off with him.”—

Aelfhelm replied in a low solemn tone—
“ Upon that tree, young man, some eighteen winters back, thy King’s lovely aunt, the fair Gunhilda, lay her head, to have it stricken off by—”

“ Dwarfs of darkness !” burst in Ulf—and turned with a flushed face upon his heel—and was striding away : — But Godwin caught him by the arm ; and uttering the thought, which by an extraordinary train of associations, the recollection of his father’s narrative had raised, he said ;
“ The ladies, Ulf—thy friends — where are they ?”—

Ulf. Why askest thou ?

Godw. They are safe ?

Ulf. Look yonder, Gudwin — (he pointed over the houses of the city to some vessels which were under weigh and making sail up the river)—Our sea-horses have spread their manes to the wind, and trample your river in their full pride and strength—my sister and my wife are there—and safe.

Godwin's impulse was naturally to ask something after Aelfgiva—but he checked the first hasty expression of his thought ; and before he had arrayed it in a more sober guise, King Knute was returning from his conference, clearly much chafed by the tidings which his scribe had communicated to him from the scroll. His brow was bent and darkened—his cheek red—his eye distent and fiery—and he dragged the yet undonned coat of mail after him, as Apollo might have done the conquered but scarcely killed Python.—

“ Well, Lords ! ”—said he, “ such of you as think not with me—and ye be the most I believe—have a strong helpmate in the foe-man's leaguer—one to whom *I* had looked for help—this tentime turncoat Streona—may the wolf of hell gnaw his treacherous bowels—he too thinks as ye — and redes me to withdraw from the siege of yon fair city.

A murmur of approbation at this intelligence broke from the assembly.

Knute. Aha ! it liketh you well then, this same traitor's counsel ?—though it seems ye

dare not openly avow it—has none among you the heart to do so ?

Ulf. Aye—and tongue too have I, King Knute.—

Knute. Indeed ?—go on—

And lowering his brow and compressing his lips—as though he would give utterance neither by look or word to the wrath that was boiling within him, the monarch slowly and deliberately began to arrange his armour, and put on his helmet and shield, as they were handed to him by an attendant.—

Ulf. I have little to say, King ; for I have said my say before—I said it, ere I knew what was Streona's mind—and mine is not changed because he happens to agree therewith. I know not *why* he doth so agree—nor care—but I know, that, turncoat as he may be, we have good ground to be sure he would not befriend his landsmen, or befoe his old friends the Danes—I thought it unwise and dangerous to attack the city now—Streona, it seems thinks so too, and I think so still ; it is ever better to be wary than rash. . . .

Knute. Methinks thy speech smacks somewhat of cowardice; brother Ulf.—

Ulf's hand instinctively raised the spear he held, with a quick and angry gesture,—but he instantly checked it, and gracefully waving the weapon over his head, slightly bowed, and with a sneer retorted;—

“Did my deed so smack when I saved thee from the fangs of the Shwedish dogs, brother King?”

“Raven of hell!”—roared the King—and then, snatching a ponderous battle-axe from the hands of his armourer, he shouted still louder—“Ye, that be brave, follow your King!”—and then rushed down the side of the hill.

An instantaneous movement took place in the groupe of officers, but not one third of them accepted the royal invitation: Ulf saw this in a moment; and before the latter party had so far detached themselves from the remainder, that the division should be apparent to the common soldiers, he cried out;—

“And ye, that be cowards, follow your leader!”

The whole army was now in motion. In two

seconds Ulf was at Knute's side, and said to him. .“ I—to the ships.”

“ Where thou wilt, hot-head !”—was the gracious answer, and—

“ The same to thee—and a mad-cap to top it”—the reply—

And Ulf with his followers, among whom was Godwin, bore down to the right, towards the Thames.

CHAPTER IX.

THE city of London, at the time of our narrative, was not only surrounded, as for some centuries afterwards, by a high turretted wall, guarding it to the east, north, and west, but was also flanked by one of a similar structure, which extended along the southern side, defending it from any attack by the river: the only approach on this quarter, except by vessels, was by a large rudely-built, and fortified wooden bridge, which had a few months back been erected, very nearly on the same site as the present, (or nearly *latè*) old one, and was then, as now, a great thoroughfare from the borough of London the Southern work, as it was called,—(our modern Southwark)—at this time considered

the great emporium to the city. This bridge was however in a state of great dilapidation — (or, if a more correct word may be coined for the nonce—of dilignation;) —as, not long before the opening of our tale, it had been nearly destroyed by a party of the Danes, who,—assisted by the Norwegian Sea-King, Saint Olave—had vigorously, but vainly, besieged the city;—and it had not yet been put in passable repair.

Against this southern wall Ulf, with his brave band of “cowards”, meant to direct his attack; while the Danish King led the greater part of the army against the western gate. The good citizens however were by no means unprepared for their reception, and gave them indeed as warm a one as an honest enemy could expect.

“Comparisons are odorous”—but nevertheless it might be matter of curious and not uninteresting speculation for the political economist, to institute a parallel between a London Alderman of the eleventh century, and one of the nineteenth; and it is conceived the comparison would not turn out so much to the disadvantage

of the latter, as might at first be expected. If the aldermen of our day are not so expert with the sword and spear as were their predecessors of olden times; it must be confessed they are quite as handy with other weapons which have at least the coincidence of being formed of the same metal;—if they are not quite as eager in the pursuit of “the mimic war;” they cannot yet be said to have entirely given up hunting—at any rate after venison;—and if there be any faith to be given to the *cedant arma togæ*, the change has surely been for the better from the rude warrior into the civil magistrate. Leaving such discussions, however, to those whom it may concern, let us, gentle reader, return to our tale.

Ulf’s party had more difficulties to encounter than the mere strength of the wall, against which they were about to direct their efforts: in the first place the fleet at his command was but a small one; as nearly half the ships were gone up the river to give safe escort to the ladies; and though what he had, might have been more than a match for those which, well manned and fitted, were already

sailing from the port of London to oppose him ; —yet, when these latter were assisted by the citizens from the wall, as well as by a mob of peasants and others, who had taken refuge from the adjacent villages amid the half ruins of Southwark, and from time to time, as the Danish vessels neared the Surrey shore, annoyed them with showers of stones, brick bats and other rude missiles; the odds were certainly not in favour of the Dane. His present object was to keep as much as possible midway in the river, so as to be out of reach of the English on land, and to bear down on the adversaries' ships ; as he foresaw, till he had overcome these, all attack on the city wall would be worse than nugatory.

Godwin, who was on board the same vessel as his friend, watched all the proceedings with an anxious—and (truth to tell)—a sickening heart. It would ill become the writer to invest the hero of so short and insignificant a tale as this with any extraordinary or preposterous qualities ; had it been a three volume romance indeed, then it might have been expected, or surely permitted, that the hero should figure

away in the possession of all manner of impossible virtues; he might be as dauntless as a demigod; and although his previous life had been wholly passed amid solitude and oxen, he might of a sudden be inspired with the deepest knowledge in the noble science of war—and prove as admirable a tactician, both by sea and land, as if he had served half a life under a Wellington and a Nelson: but, as beforesaid, in so short a tale as this, we must not look for such out-of-the-way things; we must try to content ourselves with a little simple human nature and common feeling; and under the influence of these it cannot be denied that our hero did feel mortally afraid on the present occasion. The very uncertainty of what he was to do,—and what was about to be done to him,—mingling with the predominant sense of danger,—was enough to confuse him. The flashing of the different weapons—the stern and ruthless countenances of those around him—most looking as if they were famishing with the thirst for blood—the discordant din of rattling arms—oaths—words of command, or wrath—and shouts of defiance—echoing on

every side—the very motion of the vessel—trifling as it was upon the almost smooth water—but to him new and therefore important—all these helped to add to his confusion—and the sights and sounds and sensations, which to other more accustomed hearts were exhilarating, to his were only bewildering and painful;—over and above all, was the feeling—scarcely defined indeed—but as a shadow swaying over the chaos of his thoughts—that he was engaged in no *good* cause—the consciousness or conceit of which has inspired men to the daring of all dangers and evils; and will do so, until the world grow wise enough to feel that the better a cause may truly be, the less should it be sullied with the blood of man—and that no cause can be so good, but that such means of establishing it must tend to make it a bad one.

As Godwin leant in this state of numbed sensation against the mast of the vessel, faintly contrasting the recollection of his former habits of life with his present situation, and but fitfully thinking either of Aelfgiva or Goda, he suddenly caught a glance of her brother's

dark eye—so like her own—fixed upon him, with an unusual expression of sternness, which, as their glances met, was changed, by a slight curl of the upper lip, into one of scorn: Godwin's blood rushed to his pale face—that look,—if it failed to nerve him—for his knees still tottered, and his heart still trembled—at least inspired him with resolution—he stepped up to Ulf, and said in a loud voice, (for he could not trust to its own natural tone ;—“ Can I—can I be of no good here, Ulf?”

Ulf. Of little in troth, methinks, my poor lad—(and this was said kindly, and without a tinge of sarcasm.)

Godwin's conscience however gave this expression a tone, which did not naturally belong to it, and he replied somewhat tartly;—“ Well, but try me at any rate—dost take me for a coward?”

Ulf. Why not? thou hast heard *I* am one—and thou wouldst hardly look to be braver than a tried hand: however, look not angry—(which Godwin was certainly trying to do with all his might)—but take this mace—and brain me with it as many of yon huge townsmen as may hap

to come within thy arm's swing—take heed withal that thou ward thine own self well:—keep to the windward of them, steersman—and show rather as though we would pass them—so—good!—Gudin, we shall be in the thick of them in an eye-glance—and *we* foremost in the thick throng, lad: so take heart—though after the first blow stricken and taken, thou wilt feel a man in earnest.

Ulf's manœuvre answered as it had been wished. The Londoners, supposing it was the intention of the Danes to pass them down the river, began to tack so as to prevent them, and while they were in the state of confusion necessarily caused by this sudden movement, the Danish vessels hove down upon them, and threw them into the utmost disorder: and Ulf was thus compensated for any advantage his opponents might possess in the superior lightness of their boats, which were built at the furthest for coasting only, and were therefore not near so large as those belonging to the Danes; the latter being constructed, for the most part, with half decks, and otherwise more heavily built, in order to meet the contingencies

of stress of weather and other accidents, that might happen during a passage over the open seas: but their very bulk was, by this manœuvre, rendered in the highest degree available and effective; for by thus taking the enemy by surprise, before they had time to avoid or properly prepare for them, the force, with which they bore down, was such as to shatter, or at least disable all the vessels, with which their heavily-beaked prows came in contact.

The young Dane's prediction, with regard to Godwin, was verified by the event: the Saxon—still quite uncertain what he was going to do—and still not at all liking his situation—was standing at the prow of his ship, with one foot resting near the root of the bow-spit,—and just as the crush of the iron-beak into the side of an opposing vessel very nearly shook him off his perch,—a stone from the walls of the city fell upon that protruded foot, and Godwin, considerably disconcerted by this double disaster, turned and revenged himself, by striking a heavy armed Londoner just within his reach so satisfactory a blow under his ear, that duly sensible of the

obligation, he made a bow down to the very water, and probably down to the very ground—in plain English, went to the bottom.

The individual thus peremptorily disposed of happened to be the brother of the Captain of the vessel, into which the Danish prow had rather rudely introduced itself,—an example which the water was rapidly following.—The captain was naturally annoyed at both these events—the loss of his brother, (who, being his junior, had not stood much in his way through life)—and the probable loss of his own life, which might ensue from the swamping of his boat — so in mere despair he ordered the grappling irons to be flung out, and boldly enough darted on board the adversaries' vessel, followed by as many of his men, as either had time enough to escape from their own before she went down, or were not effectually checked by, (what our lawyers call,) a stoppage *in transitu*.

The Danish vessel was now crowded to such a degree, that all fighting was necessarily dispensed with. The opposing parties were so wedged together, that no man had the power

of raising his hands, either to attack or defend—and this dense mass of living beings kept swaying from one side of the boat to the other,—to the great danger of upsetting it,—as one or the other party prevailed in pressing their opponents towards the vessel's edge :—it was a strange scene on board this Danish ship—wanting altogether the reckless and riotous energy, that generally distinguishes a desperate struggle, although each individual was now straining every nerve in the certainty that the strife *was* for life or death : but it was carried on calculatingly and almost silently—those only who were in the centre felt themselves comparatively safe ; and as from time to time, taking advantage of the purchase offered them by their situation, they exerted themselves in concert to press the throng outwards, they would set up a shout of encouragement ; but it was echoed faintly, and quite died away before it reached the outermost of that small and sullen circle—still these repeated efforts were to a certain degree effective—man after man fell over the edge—and in falling the poor wretches would occasionally

drag after them a foe, — or a friend, in their hopeless endeavours to save themselves: one man—a Dane—struck off the hand of an old comrade, who had clung to him in his need—and the next moment was himself pushed head-long into the water:—some even of those few, who could not swim, plunged into the river in the bold impulse of rather braving death than submitting to it—and Dane and Englishman were seen struggling against each other—and with each other in the reddening waters—all national hostility lost in the stronger passion of life—to be preserved at every sacrifice. More room was thus given for the exertions of others, and none were slow in using it—daggers and short swords were soon at work in the thick of the crowd; and many a man, who was stabbed to the death, was for a long time kept standing, in all appearance of life, by the press around.

Godwin had been forced into the midst of his own countrymen, and wishing rather for their room than their company, was making the most desperate, and not unsuccessful, efforts to give himself elbow room—struggling

with an energy that seemed marvellously to please a tall slim well-favoured Dane, with very long curling hair and piercingly bright blue eyes; who, standing close behind him, seemed quite contentedly to permit himself to be carried backwards and forwards whichever way it pleased fate to send him, making no exertion of his own, but immoderately laughing at those of others, and especially at Godwin's, to whom from time to time he addressed some exhortatory admonition, invariably followed by a burst of laughter.

The man's mirth began to be irksome to Godwin, who at length, as soon as he was able, turned round and asked him somewhat sharply, what he was laughing at: this only encreased the Dane's merriment, which naturally augmented Godwin's rage, and he repeated his question in a more determined and violent tone. He was answered;—"Ha! ha! —I am laughing, friend—ha! ha! ha! ha! I am only laughing—ha! ha! ha!"

Godw. At what, fool?

"Ha! ha! my right name's Haco, friend—and I am laughing as much—ha! ha! as much

at thee, as at any other thing in the world!—ha! ha!—to see how a Saxon gooseling is a pecking at his kindred ganders — ha! ha! ha!”

Godwin's only reply to this facetious remark was by raising a dagger: but the young Danish Democritus caught his wrist,—wrenched the weapon from his hand,—and with a laugh flung it over their heads high into the air adding; “Why, friendling, thou'lt bring the ravens on thee, as well as the geese—ha! ha! —make as few foes as may be in this naughty world; ha! ha! ha!”

Godwin, with a still more angry exclamation, not unlike the fashionable oath of a modern coal-heaver, began to raise the heavy mace, which hung by a thong to his right wrist, when he was forestalled by a stout square-built Londoner, who seized the Dane by the rim of his gorget, and swung him sharply round, exclaiming;—“I owe thee an old reckoning of grudge, Haco.”

“Double or quits be the stake;”—answered Haco with his same laugh, as he shook off the Londoner, and laid him prostrate on the

deck, with a facility, that quite astonished Godwin, when he considered the comparative shape and apparent strength of the two men.

Haco. Aha! ha! ha! Come brain me this goose, friend of our leader:—wilt not?—Oh! then; there be more ways than one of doing such a deed.

And so saying he raised his heel, which was armed with a heavy iron plate and spike, and dashed it down upon the head of his unfortunate foe, with such force, that it crushed through iron mail, and skull—and scattered his blood and brains about, as though he had trod hastily into a muddy puddle.

With a revolting sense of horror Godwin turned aside from this disgusting spectacle, and encountered the eyes of Ulf, who was cutting his way towards him:—one more sweep of his huge sword—somewhat unpleasantly close to Godwin,—and the Dane stood as close;—and thus addressed him; “What idle again, Gudwin? thou forespakest better things at the beginning.”

Godw. I have not been idle, Ulf.

Haco. No—that I will witness. Ha! ha! ha!

Ulf. Ah ! kinsman Haco—how farest thou ?

Haco. Wondersome weary of this work already.

Ulf. Thou liest—thou never yet wert weary of working mischief. Come, Gudin, follow me ; we must clear the decks of these lubbards.

Haco. Geese, man—that's their right name—ha ! ha ! ha ! is it not Gudin ? . . since that's thine : come—come, don't sulk.

Ulf. What ! have ye quarrelled ?—make it up, like great babies as ye both are : no one ever quarrels with Haco, Gudin.

Haco. No one *twice*, in troth ; (and he took Godwin's proffered hand and shook it heartily, adding in a lower voice, as his laugh died away into a yawn ;)—He may say what he will though, but I *am* woundy weary of all this.

As they were following Ulf, who apparently was making a regular tour of the vessel, an old white-headed Saxon sprung up from the hold, where he had been forced down, and caught hold of Haco's hair, crying out ; “ Devil ! devil ! thou owest me for a son's life.”

Haco. Let go my hair, old man, or the foul

fiend fetch thee—I have just paid his brother yonder for thee—wouldst have me pay twice over? ha! ha!—but let go my hair—thou hurtest me.

This was cried out as loudly and fractionally, as if the speaker were indeed the great baby Ulf had designated him—he heard the exclamation, and turning round laughed out a—“poor fellow!”—and with a back-stroke of his sword cut right through the lock of hair, which the old Saxon held by; who, thus suddenly released, tottered and fell back into the hold.

Haco. Ban you both for a pair of the most bungling shearers that ever sheared man—my poor hair! I must have that ringlet back though, with thy leave, old Ceorl.

And having said this, he leapt after the Saxon into the hold below.

In a few minutes he rejoined Ulf and Godwin, with a serious—even a sad face—bearing his long lock of hair in his left hand, while his right remained as it had been, when Godwin first saw him, unarmed except by a gauntlet of steel scale-mail, with large spiked knobs of iron at the back and knuckles; which,

though a decently efficient weapon in suitable cases, might have seemed hardly sufficient in a conflict of swords and spears—maces and axes, such as was now raging around.

Ulf noticed his kinsman's unguardedness (if there be such a word) and remarked ;—
“Why, Haco, art going to trust all to luck and thy fist?”

Haco. Ah no ! kinsman—wait a while—only look here what thou hast done with thine ugly sword—this was the handsomest lock of my head now—I'd not have minded had it been cut off for one of yon old Ceorl's fair landswomen—well I must swear it was—to the first I fall in with—and for *her* :—meanwhile, that for thee, for laughing at what toucheth thee not.

He struck a fat Saxon, who was standing by, listening with great good humour to his speech, a blow with his closed hand full in the face ; it sent him bleeding backwards upon the deck.

“That touched him near enough methinks”—said Godwin with a timidity, wherewith a young man generally lets off his first jests in the company of old jokers :—mere *mauvaise honte*,

take my word for it, youthful punster,—whoever you may be, that read this book—and such as will always, as it did in this instance, ensure you certain failure, and your own consequent self-abashment.

“So much for my fist”—said Haco—“now for my luck.”

He thrust the lock of hair down the gorget of his hood of mail, drew out his sword, and waving it over his head, cried out ;—“Now ! a life for every hair !”—and dashed into the midst of a groupe of Saxons.

“Stay and reckon them first”—shouted Ulf after him.

Haco’s laugh and answer were heard, “Nay, nay—the reckoning ever after the banquet :” but he did not turn his head—and Ulf and Godwin directly afterwards lost sight of him.

They two continued fighting side by side ; and the former now with as much circumspection and nerve, as if he had never handled a more harmless weapon than the ponderous mace, with which he was knocking men down, very much to his own and his comrade’s satisfaction. During the morning’s work he had

good reason to acknowledge the truth of Ulf's recommendation of the suit of armour he had given him—many a good hard blow and thrust, from sword and spear, did it turn aside with no other effect than that which we moderns would feel from the smart application of a thickish piece of ground ash or black-thorn—unpleasant enough to be sure at the time, and like to cause bruises afterwards—but I should imagine—having, I must own, no experience on either side of the question—that these were not so bad as wounds and scars:—and I presume men thought so formerly; else why did they wear armour? especially the invulnerables, as we learn from the poets they did.

Once when Godwin was fighting with a Londoner, and, his foot slipping on the blood-smeared deck, he had fallen prostrate, Ulf stood over him and received on his shield a blow from the Londoner's mace, which, if it had fallen where intended, would probably have prevented Godwin the trouble of getting up again: he soon repaid the favour, when Ulf was engaged hand to hand with one foe,

and another was about to stab him unawares in the side of the neck, (the mail flap which hung from his helmet having been wrenched off in the course of the fray :)—Godwin seized the man (who was doing *such* an unfair thing behind his friend's back) by the uplifted arm, and swung him over the edge of the vessel into the river—the man clung to Godwin's armour in his fall, and dragged him after him, and though a tolerable swimmer, yet embarrassed by his heavy armour, and the desperate struggles of a drowning man, Godwin would certainly have shared the fate of his adversary, when a bolt from a cross-bow drove sheer into the Londoner's brain, who instantly loosed his hold and sank; the hand that had shot the bolt was directly lowered to Godwin's assistance, and as it raised him into the vessel, his saviour with a laugh exclaimed;—"Ha! ha! ha! it is quite wondersome to see how ye geese take to the water ha! ha!"

Such circumstances were, in these rude and unhappy times, the foundations whereon friendships between man and man were most frequently erected—similarity of disposition—

or moral attributes being seldom taken into consideration.

In less than three quarters of an hour the Danish ship was very considerably cleared—of a great portion indeed of its own proper men,—and of the whole of the London intruders: the unsightly bodies of the slain and wounded lay in heaps about the deck and in the hold—and Ulf, that he might be enabled in as good trim as possible to join his other ships,—(which were still in hard contest with the English,) gave orders that all the corpses should be thrown overboard;—while the wounded of both sides he charitably commanded to be crammed away into the hold; he himself, attended by Godwin and Haco, assisting in the execution of his own orders. During the whole of this ceremony, there was as much mirth going on, as though the party were occupied in a very pleasant and agreeable pursuit; for with these men bloodshed and slaughter were so thoroughly a matter of mere hard labour, that as soon as they had ceased from the actual toil, they flew to jests and laughter with the same avidity and carelessness, that schoolboys

do to their cricket or football, when the tasks of the day are completed.

One of the first bodies, which fell in the way of our three friends, was that of the old Saxon, who had caught Haco by the hair : he was lying in a pond of his own blood—and had evidently been most deliberately butchered ; his throat was cut nearly round, so that his head was almost severed from his body ; and hung dangling back,—the hideous chasm of his wound thus yawning to its utmost extent.

At first they did not recognize him, so besmeared and disfigured were his features ; but as Haco stooped and laid hold of his once silver white locks, now clotted with black blood, he cried out ; “Aha ! old friend—just where I left thee.”

Ulf muttered in his throat ;—“Cold blooded scoundrel !”

Haco looked up with distended eyes and raised brows, as though to wonder what his kinsman could mean ; and when he saw that his teeth were clenched, his lips curled, his face red, and his eyes fixed angrily upon him,

he burst out laughing—but instantly checking himself, he added in a deep and earnest tone ;—No—no—by my troth and manhood—no.—Thou doest me foul wrong, kinsman, if thou believe this of Haco.”

Ulf. I did *think* it, Haco—but forgive me : I should have known thee better, than deemed so ill of thee.

Haco. True for thee there :—no—I left the old man barely stunned by a knock-down blow I lent him—as without some such ceremony I should never have gotten my lock of hair again from the old grey beard :—I’d give my iron hand-shoe to know the man who slew him though.

A soldier, who was passing by with the corpse of a comrade over his shoulder, stopped and said ; “ That did I then, Head-man ; and would mainly like the guerdon.”

Haco. Take it then, in the name of the devil—(and so saying, he struck him his favourite blow with the back of his clenched hand, which sent him reeling a few paces

back with his burden, till they both fell heavily together : Haco laughed and added ;—
“ My only fear is, that that cursen Seaxon head-piece thou hast stolen will lessen the worth of thy guerdon somewhat—which was natheless dealt as fairly as might be:—yes the hind stirs.”

Ulf. Better—better—kinsman—we cannot spare a man now.—

Haco. Troth ! ask the man if I spared him.

And at a jest though much on a par with Godwin's, that was mentioned some time back, both Haco and Ulf laughed so loudly, that the young Saxon felt he should have seemed very unsocial, or at least have laid himself open to the imputation of great stupidity, if he had not laughed with them.

By the time Ulf was enabled to join the rest of his fleet, the Londoners had been effectually discomfited—by far the greater part of the vessels having been either sunk, captured, or disabled—and the few, that were capable of such an exertion, now making, at their utmost speed, for the port.

Ulf's next object was to attack the wall ; but before he commenced this movement, he

wished to ascertain, if possible, what success had attended the efforts of his royal brother-in-law :—he therefore gave orders for a small boat to row to the Middlesex shore, and reconnoitre ; and the command of this enterprize he entrusted to Haco, who laughed as he leapt into the boat, and cried out ;—“ Thou’rt bent on making me earn a good night’s sleep, I see, kinsman ; if not a longer one ”—and as though at the very thoughts of it, he yawned portentously.

He had not proceeded far from the side of the ship, bearing up the river, in order to effect a landing out of bow-shot from the city, when Ulf, who was standing on the deck, suddenly exclaimed ;—“ Death of my father ! see yonder, Gudín—what’s doing there ? ”

Godwin looked in the appointed direction, and saw the Danish army in full march up a hill away from the city ; and while he was joining his friend in wondering what could be the cause of this sudden retreat ; Ulf said ; “ The Iron-side is there, I would wager my life—Hoh ! Haco ! back—man—back !— ”

Haco heard the shout, but probably not

its import—for he merely turned back his head, laughed loud, and waving his hand, shouted something in return, which also did not reach its intended destination.

Ulf, in a mutter bade him go to—a place not to be mentioned, even to *eyes* polite,—for a fool; and then anxiously waited what would become of him.

Before the boat got near enough to the shore to enable those on board to attempt a landing,—(which indeed they would have found it difficult to do in most places, as it was now low water; and deep mud, between the river and its banks, prevented access to the firm land;)—a horseman was observed to gallop down from the Danish army at a furious rate, towards the water's edge. He seemed to see Haco, and to change his course accordingly, which before was directed towards the main fleet.

Ulf observed—"So—he'll make the mad-brain hear, it is to be hoped—tidings of ill though, I fear."

The horseman was now close upon the bank, and yet, to the astonishment of the spectators,

he neither reined in, nor turned aside ; but still pushed right forward.—

Ulf. Is the man wood ?—or such an ass, as to think a horse can swim through mud, up to his belly-girth.

Godw. He seems to have lost all sway over the beast—see, how he tugs at the reins !—

Ulf. Who can it be ?—he is lost if—

Before he could end his sentence, the over excited animal had plunged into the mud, and in a moment afterwards was sliding about, without the least power of regulating his own motions.

“ Now—turn him !—turn him to the shore ! ” —shouted *Ulf*, though he must himself have known without the least chance of being heard :—“ firm hand and steady seat may yet save them both—and both or neither—Block-head ! he is not spurring the steed surely.”

Ulf's negatively uttered conjecture was correct—the horseman, though still retaining much presence of mind, had evidently lost his prudence ; and even the former advantage was rapidly deserting him, as his horse, becoming

more restive under the influence of the spur, plunged farther and deeper in, thus rendering his rider's situation every moment more precarious—the man was confounded too, by the deafening and unintelligible shouts of encouragement or advice, that were sent from his countrymen in the ships—he was half blinded and choked by the filth, which his horse at every fresh plunge splashed around him—he let go the reins and clung round the neck with his arms—and more tightly than before pressed his bent legs against his horse's sides—the long iron spurs, or rather spikes went deep through the hide—the horse reared—and slipped on one side with his head in the mud—the man tried to turn in the saddle, but could not—the spurs were too fast in the beast's flesh, who, under the pain, made one more terrific plunge—reared once more to his full height—and fell backwards, burying his rider beneath him.

A dead silence instantaneously followed ; broken only by the continuous plashing struggles of the man and brute—and the occasional sobs of the latter. Haco, venturing as near to

the mud bank as he could, without running upon it, threw out a rope towards the spot, in the hopes of yet saving the man—but it was too short, in the first place, as it did not reach more than half way to the place required ; and it would have been too late, even had it been longer, for all was still there in a very few moments : and the sheet of mud, though spotted and discoloured, resumed its former slimy aspect.

Godwin, who had watched the catastrophe till it was over, and then turned away sick at having done so, now suddenly called his friend's attention to some ships, which were making fast down the river towards them.

Ulf cried out—"As I live, Gudín, those be our ships coming back—chased, I wonder?—or what?—we must send a rowing boat out to get their tidings quicker. The most blundering day I ever fought through."

Not heeding Godwin's question whether there would not be danger to the ladies, Ulf proceeded to give the necessary orders to the captain of the nearest vessel ; but before they could be executed, Haco, having

also descried the approaching vessels, was off at full speed towards them.—

Ulf. Good—he will do better—and what *we* are to do, we shall find out anon, I take it:—not down the river any wise; for I see our kingly brother is at quick march straight the other way. *Danger* thou saidst—umph!—may be.—Aha! the riddle is out then—and as I guessed it:—see yonder spinney of spears at the western gate, Gudín—and the floating banner, that flutters above them all: Aedmund is in earnest there—and our cunning King has thought it wise to eat his own words, and be off without giving the Saxon the meeting:—what a high-blown rage he will be in at all this now—I would not take his crown to be forced to have the stubborn brain, that it girdles:—but—

Your kings—your kings—

They may do strange things—

as old Ruder the Rymer says. (The boat was now back within ear-shot of Ulf's ship; and he continued)—Now Haco, what news?

Haco. Ha! ha! ha! Bad enough!

Ulf. Thought so, by thy laughing. Come! the worst at once.

Haco. Oh ! here's one, who'll make worse of the worst itself.

He sprung into the vessel, followed, in a more deliberate manner, by a short squat squabby man, whom Ulf greeted by the name of Aelfheagge,—which, being interpreted, signifieth—*Tall as an elf*—in which cognomen, there was probably as much irony then, as there would be earnest now-a-days.

Ulf. And now give thy tidings in as few words as may be, friend ; for we have little time to waste in talk.

Be it known in the mean while, that to the individual thus addressed, had been entrusted the command of that portion of the fleet, which had been sent as an escort with the ladies.

Aelfh. Thou speakest sooth, headman ; there is little time to waste in words—nor will I do so now—not that I know I am ever given to waste—in any way—that time, the which may be somehow well employed.—

Ulf. Well—well—to the point—to the point.

Aelfh. To the point we shall come in due time, headman—but every thing hath its time,—even as every time hath—ahem !—

Haco whispered to Godwin—"Wait a bit, and thou shalt see Ulf in great wrath."

To which Godwin answered—"Little wonder: I am so already."

Aelfheagge continued—"I know not, head-man, how ye have found the wind hereabouts—but farther up the river, it has been blowing from every point in the sky—and that is the great fault I ever find with your inland sailing, that one never can know what mind the wind will be of for two eye-twinkles together—and up this river methinks it chops and changes more than I ever met with any wind, ever since I have served on ship-board—and that is now just nine and thirty winters, come next spring—to say nothing of the service of my father, who...

Ulf. Thunder and hail! would thou wouldst say nothing, if thou canst not to the point—what has all this to do with the business, booby?—what brings thee back?

Aelfh. Let me see—what has it to do? why, I was speaking of the wind, was I not?

Ulf. What brings thee back, I ask?—not this cursed wind, which thou hast sailed right in the teeth of, to come hither.

Aelfh. Nay—nay—headman—not *right* in the teeth, so to say—for the wind is—now—and has been, for the last half watch, I take it,—nor-east by east; and we have been sailing.....

Ulf. To hell—thou shalt sail, or swim straight-ways; an thou answer not—(he caught hold of Aelfheagge by the throat) tell me, dog, what brings thee back, in five words.

Aelfh. I cannot—by any means—utter half so many words—an thou loosen not thy hold—from my throat.

Haco. Better take him at his five words, Ulf, or we shall know nothing about it—ha! ha! ha! he has told me six times as much as he has thee—and yet I know just as little.

Ulf. Well fool—have it thine own way—(and he flung the man from him with such force, that he must certainly have fallen backwards into the hold, had he not struck the back of his head against the mast, and was thus bounded back again into Ulf's arms—who grappled him by the shoulder—shook him violently—and shouted in his ear;—Now I've got thee again I'll shake thy bones out

of thy fat, if thou answer not straightforward.

Aelfh. Bless me!—well!—where was I?

Haco. Not quite in the teeth of the wind; but mighty near in the throat of the river: ha! ha! what a funny little hole thou wouldst ha' made in the water, Aelfheagge.

Ulf. Now thou hast got breath again—answer.

Aelfh. What?

Haco. Oh! that Blocer isn't here to note down, that for once Aelfheagge answered in one short word.

Ulf. What brings thee back?

Aelfh. I see. I shall unfold the whole tale in as few words as thou couldst wish, head-man. Though this is not the first time—nor the second—nor may the ninth, that I have been up this river, yet I openly avouch, I know not yet the names of half

Ulf growled out an angry: “Now!”—and began shaking his victim as vigorously as though he meant really to put his above threat into immediate execution.

Aelfh. We—e—ell—I—I—I will go—o—on.

Bless me—pshaw! how this kind of thing takes away one's breath.

Haco. It's clear we can make nothing out of him, Ulf. Here are our ships now close at hand—I'll go on board some of them, and find some one, who can unfold the matter to us.

Aelfh. Thou'lt find no one who knows half so much about it, as I do, Haco.

Haco. Or will *talk* half so much about it, I trust, old boy. Why what in the name of evil is this? *other* ships coming down the river?—Seaxon ones, I trow.

Aelfh. Aye—that's it!

Ulf and Haco spoke together, the latter asking: "That's *what*?" and the former: "*What's* that?"

And Aelfheagge answered: "That's what I was all along going to tell thee, headman, about these self-same ships."

Ulf. How many be there?

Aelfh. That I cannot for a surety say, in as much as I turned hither so soon as I saw them at all.

Ulf. Was that cowardice, or folly, now?

(Aelfheagge began to make a suitable answer to this question, but Ulf without paying the least attention to him, continued;)—It boots nothing after all ;—Haco, leap into yon boat—get the ship with the women fenced in by the rest of the fleet, on all sides ;—that done—we will cut through them—stay—I will come with thee, Haco :—stop on board, Gudin, till I come back.—Steersman, bring the ship round to the van, I will join thee there.

Having said this, he sprang after Haco into the boat, and they were rowed away up to the newly arrived ships.

Godwin was not a little mortified at being obliged to remain behind, without being able to satisfy himself as to the safety of the females, about whom,—as he fancied collectively—he felt a very sudden and intense interest: and his fancy was not entirely devoid of foundation—for he could not be entirely careless of the welfare of his friend's wife, though he had as yet seen so little of her; while for another female relative of his—of whom he had seen quite as little,—he felt more interest than he perhaps acknowledged to himself;—and though he sin-

cerely believed he had brought himself not to care any more about Aelfgiva, yet he certainly did—enough at least to make her safety a matter of consideration to him, so that he was in reality doubly deceiving himself.

But another mortification, which Godwin had to undergo, was listening to the long harangue of Aelfheagge, the beginning of which—(for to no reader—not even the most patient,—would I administer the whole dose)—was somewhat as follows :

“ Thus it is, young man,—thus it ever is,—and thus as thou waxest elder, thou wilt find it ever will be,—that those, who have done good deeds in their time, and have grown old in the doing such, are slighted by the young and upstart, who deem that bravery of heart and bearing can make every amends for skill and knowledge. Not that I mean our Headman,—the brother-in-law of our King,—is wanting in either of these—but he is young, young man, and so too is his aforesaid brother-in-law our King; and they are both too much given to the trusting in that bravery I spake of, and the which that they both have, none can gain-

say, who is any wise a truth-speaker, but they are too much given to trust all to that, which unaided is of but little avail—for what availeth might without cunning to back it? What booketh the heart to be strong, if the head be weak; even as the ship, whose masts are of oak and whose sails are of strong canvass, if without a rudder, should be tossed about and driven upon shoals and rocks—I say rocks, because in the seas,—where may be thou hast never been,—there be such things,—and also shoals, which is not the most fitting word for the mud-banks, whereby we are surrounded; and this river though a broad and fair one, is by no means like a sea, unless indeed it be some of those inland seas, which I mind to have sailed across in Norwegenland, when some twenty winters back, I went with our then King,—that was this King's father,—to wage war against Olave the King of that land; and truth to speak,—the which I love to speak and hear spoken at all times and risks, we were beaten back again, with much loss of men and wealth, and some of good name—but that latter at least was soon redeemed—and indeed I am

bold to say that our mishap was altogether to be laid to the chance of war, rather than to any lack of either skill or bravery on our part—for even the bravest and most skilful must at times yield to the stress of chance—even as the steersman, be he never so good, cannot always stand against the stress of weather—which brings me to the point.”

How it did so, it might be difficult to determine; but after this rather Nestorian induction, he commenced and proceeded to relate, how after he had made some way up the river;—giving Godwin the most accurately topographical descriptions of the different points he had passed, but the names of which he repeated his most solemn assertion he did not know—he of a sudden came in sight of four vessels, who were sailing round a tongue of land towards him; and that after taking counsel between his head and his heart,—which he assured Godwin should always be done in all matters even of the most trifling importance,—he had deemed it prudent to turn back—not with any thought of flying before a foe, but taking into due consideration the weight of the

charge, with which he was entrusted, and the chance that there might be other vessels in the rear : he then launched into a disquisition on prudence, branching out at intervals into various observations on the art of war,—the natural history of the Kraken,—the best mode of making the voice heard during a storm,—and of keeping vegetables fresh during a sea-voyage,—with other such relative and appropriate matters; in the full course of which he was checked by the return of Ulf.

“Now, Aelfheagge,” he said, as he mounted the vessel—“off with thee, man, and change place with Haco, who for the nonce hath the command of thy ship—ladies and all: get all the boats out—well manned—Haco will take charge of one—let them all keep close round thy ship—like a brood of young ducklings round their mother—and heark, lad, turn not tail, and run foul of thy young ones, shouldst thou hap to come in sight of a few of the foemen’s sail—but keep steadily on—thou shalt come to no harm—now, away with thee.”

“Nay, but headman,” said Aelfheagge, lingering with one foot on the deck, and the other on

the ladder—"I swear now the only ground I had for returning was..."

To get out of the way—retorted Ulf.

Aelfh.—Nay—nay—by my troth—not for mine own sake—

Ulf. Then for thine own sake, I rede thee to get out of harm's way now—or of a surety thou wilt—somehow or other—get a fall backwards into the boat—and may be into the water:—go—go—and without a speech.—

Aelfheagge obeyed—though not without a speech—but as the whole of it—(except the words—"I am not fond of speaking")—was lost upon Ulf, and it must be added upon Godwin too, the reader must excuse the omission thereof.

Ulf continued—"Gudin, thou hast fought bravely to-day, wilt thou undertake the charge of one of the boats?"

Godwin blushed, and looked modest; though he felt, in fact, proud of what he considered a very honourable distinction on the part of his friend, for in his own estimation, and perhaps in that of some readers, the charge thus offered to him was one of danger, and one that required both

the requisites, concerning which Aelfheagge had just favoured him with a dissertation—but Ulf knew better than either Godwin or the reader—he calculated, indeed, the impression made upon the former by his offer would be just what it was—and that the young Saxon's flattered vanity would magnify the importance of the charge, wherewith he proposed to entrust him—for he himself knew, that in reality no skill, and a merely ordinary share of bravery were requisite for the office ; and, even if Godwin had exhibited a much less satisfactory portion of the latter quality, than he had done during that morning's fight, still Ulf would have been contented to have confided the present charge to him—out of pure necessity, arising from the paucity of men, whom he might, with any appearance of decency, place in authority over others;—so many of his captains had been either slain or disabled in the preceding conflict—and the presence of most of the rest being indispensably required to manage the larger vessels.

Godwin expressed his willing acquiescence

in the proposed arrangement ; and at the same time his fears that he was unworthy a charge of such weight.

His friend did not care to undeceive him as to this latter point—but replied very gravely —“ True Godwin—it is of great weight—even to guard the wife and the sister of thy friend—but the weightier the charge, the lighter should seem the duty—go—and prove thyself worthy of it.—Aelfheagge, this young Saxon then goes with thee—thou wilt leave him in charge of that boat—and unfold to him all that may be needful for him to do.”

Aelfheagge promised he would do as desired—and most elaborately did he keep his word ; and if Godwin’s patience was not quite exhausted, it was perhaps owing to the newly-induced respect wherewith the Dane’s garbularity was tempered—who now offered his advice with the most scrupulous deference ; for like many other railers against princes, peers and potentates, he was at heart a great time-server, and a most obsequious venerator of a title.

But Godwin's attention was in truth very little engaged by the advice of his counsellor—even sugared as it was—he was occupied—at first with some awkward thoughts, that would intrude about the propriety of his being in arms against his countrymen—and afterwards—(when by dint of every thing but reason) he had expelled these intruders in watching the deck of the ship, which they were approaching, whereon he plainly saw Haco in conversation with three ladies : Godwin's heart beat quickly at the sight—and yet more quickly, as he perceived the young Dane very gallantly kiss the hands of two of them—and then adroitly—and as Godwin thought very ostentatiously—spring into a boat. Before they got near enough to the vessel for Godwin to distinguish the ladies' features, they had descended into the hold ; and he thus lost all chance of seeing them, as he had no excuse for ascending the vessel.

In a few minutes the Danish fleet was arranged, and in motion up the river : the ships arranged in the shape of a long oval, having each end pointed so as to form a

wedge; Ulf's vessel being the point of the vanward angle:—in the centre was the ship containing the females—immediately round which, rowed a swarm of small boats—fenced in by a line of the larger vessels.

Opposite the island of Thorney—a small spot of land bounded on the south by the river, and on every other side by extensive marshes—so called from the numerous thorn-bushes by which it was overgrown; among which stood several poor fishermen's hovels, around the ruins of an old Roman temple of Apollo—(and on the site of which latter, some years after, King Edward the Confessor laid the groundwork of our present Westminster Abbey)—opposite this island, the Saxon ships, amounting altogether not to more than a score, were ranged, crescentwise, across the river—as though with the intention of opposing the enemy.—But as the Danes approached, this curved line of ships opened, those in the centre fell back on either hand close to the shore, so as apparently to leave a free passage for the Danish vessels.

On they came steadily and swiftly—and it

seemed as though they would pass without either party molesting the other; when suddenly, as the Danes had about midway passed the Saxons, the latter drove in upon them with an irresistible fury; by this manœuvre attacking the weakest part of the enemy's fleet, that which was guarded by only a single line of ships, through which they easily broke and were now running down, or scattering on either side the smaller boats, apparently with as much facility as a ruffled swan would dash through a bed of river-lilies.

Ulf was vexed beyond expression, and quite as much so, by being outwitted, as by the chance of defeat or discomfiture, with which he seemed to be threatened; he ordered the vessels in the van to turn round to the succour of the others; and at the same time sent word along the line to Aelfheagge to sail on—avoiding fight as much as possible.—But the mandate was of but little avail; for by the time it reached its destination, a Saxon vessel was along side of the Dane's—and the crew of each were already closely engaged in desperate conflict:—on board the

former was Godwin:—in its progress it had overturned the boat in which he was standing—he had saved himself by scrambling up the side of the ship, scarcely conscious of the peril into which he was thrusting himself—and yet when a man on board was about to cut him down, with great presence of mind he had called out—“Darest thou slay a Saxon Eorl?”

The man dropped his weapon with the same alacrity, that the Gaul displayed, when a somewhat similar exclamation was addressed to him by the third founder of Rome; and Godwin trod the deck of the Saxon ship unregarded and unknown.

He had remained tranquil enough till he saw that the hostile intentions of his countrymen were directed against the vessel which enshrined so much of interest to him—and then bawling to them to beware, he began exercising his sword, (having dropped his mace in the water) with an energy that spoke greatly for his zeal, but very little for his prudence: for the result was that some of the sailors thinking him mad—thus putting the most fa-

vourable construction on his conduct—laid him prostrate and stunned upon the deck.

When he recovered, the first objects that met his dim sight were two men bending over him—the one with a raised battle-axe—seemingly about to descend upon his own—(Godwin's)—head—and the other staring into his face, and holding his comrade's uplifted arm.

Godwin sighed out—"They must be saved"—and the latter—that is the man who was staring at him,—instantly rejoined—

"There—said he was a landsman—knew it by the cut of his gib"—

This man had probably saved our hero's life—if so, he received but a sorry reward for his pains; for the next moment Godwin leapt up—knocked him backwards overboard—stabbed the axe-bearer to the heart—and then sprang into Aelfheagge's ship.—This was now, he found, in possession of the Saxons: Aelfheagge himself he perceived bound to the mast, and attempting to reason with four or five Saxons who were heartily laughing at him—and perhaps not quite understanding him: he broke off

from his argument to call to Godwin,—who paid him no attention however, but hastened down into the hold, whence he distinctly heard the cries and wailing of women.

He found them all three there—Aelfgiva—Adrida—and Goda—together with several of their maidens; it was these latter, who were shrieking: the two former ladies were already bound; Aelfgiva was sitting, looking haughty and careless; Adrida stood, looking haughty also, but with an expression of rage in her blue eyes, that even added to her beauty, as Godwin thought in the momentary glance he gave her; for his whole attention was at once drawn to Goda, who with dishevelled hair and torn garments, and a bloody dagger grasped in her hand, was struggling desperately with a man, probably the captain of the Saxon ship, who seemed foiled in his endeavours to secure the hands of the Danish maiden.

“Fixen!” he cried out—“thou hast drawn blood from me—and shalt....”

His tongue was stopped by the sudden dashing in of his front teeth by the hilt of Godwin’s sword, which he had swung round

by the blade, and flung against the Saxon's mouth;—his face being the only part of his person, that was unprotected by armour:—he was stunned, and reeled back—and before he could at all recover himself, the same uncouth weapon had inflicted a settling wound under his left temple.

As Godwin dealt the last blow he roared out —“ Danes—be there none here to fight for the sisters of your King and your leader ?”

About half a score of Danes, who had been battling in the back-ground with the Saxons, now sprang forward at this appeal; and with increased fury attacked their more numerous but not so desperate foes: the conflict raged madly for some seconds; during which Godwin, though fighting incessantly, noticed that the noise on the deck above had augmented—stamping and trampling mingled with shouts and groans—and became more and more confounded together—while from various spots the hot blood was literally streaming down upon the fighters beneath.—After a short interval of this doubtful riot, Ulf, with a shout, leapt into the hold—stood still—glanced round him

quickly but tremulously—drew in his breath a moment—and then cried out—“ Safe—safe—all saved ! by Tuisco ! ”

He darted up to his wife—kissed her lips, and cut her bonds with his sword—kissed her again—then cut Aelfgiva’s bonds—and then ran up to Godwin, who was holding Goda almost fainting in his arms : Ulf kissed her cheek — clasped and wrung Godwin’s hand — muttered some inarticulate sounds, while the tears stood in his eyes—laughed, bit his lip—nodded hastily to his friend—and again bounded upon the deck ;—cutting down two Saxons in his extasy, and by way of finale.

In a few minutes all the enemy who were in the hold either were slaughtered, or had yielded themselves : meanwhile the tumult above gradually died away ; and when Ulf made his second appearance in the hold, it was with the welcome assurance, that the foe had withdrawn their ships, and that they themselves were now again sailing in perfect safety up the river.

CHAPTER X.

As soon as Ulf had seen tranquillity restored on board Aelfheagge's vessel, he left it, after taking leave of his wife and sister however ; and Godwin, very much against his inclination, felt it his duty to follow him. No other incident worth noting occurred till they arrived off Brentford ; before which town they perceived the Danish army had encamped : whereupon Ulf gave orders for their debarkation and, with Godwin, accompanied the ladies to Knute's tent.

They were received graciously enough by the monarch ; who, in spite of his recent defeat—(or, I believe, under such circumstances the

more correct military phrase would be retreat)—happened to be in exceedingly good humour. He had just finished a good meal, which, may be, contributed some little to his said humour, and very hospitably commanded the board to be instantly replenished for the new comers. But the females requested to be excused, pleading fatigue ; therefore they retired, and Ulf followed their example ; first having given the King a succinct account of the ‘hair-breadth ‘scapes,’ they had gone through ; though something to Godwin’s astonishment Ulf did not mention his name throughout ; and he could not help thinking that, at least from him, his conduct had merited some notice.

On their way to Ulf’s tent, Godwin thought he was about to allude to this omission when he began a speech thus :—

“ I dare say, Gudwin, thou thoughtest my haviour rather odd just now ; didst not ? ”

Godw. In what, Ulf ?

Ulf. Oh !—Why in that I took not the King’s bidding to eat with him—but thou must know that, reckless as I may seem, meliketh not to be nicknamed coward ; so that till my kingly

brother take back that unkingly word, we break not bread together.

Whether this was what Ulf originally meant to have explained, when he first addressed Godwin, cannot, I should suppose, be a matter of very great interest to any one ; at all events Godwin thought it was all quite right, and moreover said he thought his friend was so.

When they arrived at Ulf's tent, they made as good a meal as they could from such unsophisticated viands as were within their reach, consisting of boiled eels, roast horse flesh, oaten cakes, and cheese, with plenty of strong ale to wash them down. Having thus most generously satisfied the wants of nature, they changed their dress, each putting on one of the same texture and shape—(for they both belonged to Ulf)—namely hosen, and close coats reaching to the knee, of linen—differing however in colour ;—Ulf's being of lilac, and Godwin's of dark green : while dressing, the latter complained grievously to his friend of his bruises and stiffness ; and felt still more sore, when Ulf heartily laughed at him.

“Never fear, Gudin,”—he said—“no need for the leech this bout;—but cheer up—thou mayst be luckier another—and then the sheen fingers of ladies may be busied in thy healing: but come; let us take a stroll along the meadows by the water side; the aftermidday is bright and hot—and I have no mind to sit weltering in a tent: we will go to the King some while before even-meal-tide—and just see if he have aught to say to me.”

Godw. But may hap he may want thee, ere then.

Ulf. He can send for me.

Godw. But those he sends will know not where to find thee.

Ulf. Paugh! they can seek for me—worry not thyself upon that head, dear lad—but come out a-walking.

They went accordingly, westward away from the town of Old Brentford, as it is now called,—which then, as now, was built close down to the Thames; and before whose walls the Danish camp was now pitched: they sauntered along the pleasant meadows, that now form part of the park belonging to Sion house, and Godwin,

to whom the present cultivated prospect offered a not unpleasing contrast with the wild scenery in which his youth had been passed, grew contemplative and began to moralise aloud upon the astonishing absurdity of man, who could not be content to enjoy such spots in their beauty and tranquillity, but must soil them with bloodshed and slaughter.

“Aye—but to win them, Gudin,” interrupted Ulf, who hated moralising—and having the advantage of some years of age, and many of experience, over the simple neatherd, could naturally judge much more correctly than Godwin about such matters—he continued—“To win such a lovely land, Gudin—were it not worth the shedding of much blood—aye—even to the slaying of half a folk?—As the world wags, blood must be shed—and slaughter must be done, as the price of all that is worthy of man—of all that is dear to him—a somewhat dear price, mayhap thou mayst say—but sure none but women or the woman-hearted among men would withhold the payment of it.”

To this it may perhaps be inferred that Godwin had nothing to reply—as he did in

fact not reply—but if any reader, not happening quite to agree with Ulf's view of the case, should think ill of our hero for not being able to rebut the same ; let him, or her, suppose he *could* have said all that there was to say on the subject, and was only prevented from so doing by the sound of a very sweet voice, that was heard singing behind a row of old thorn trees, which ran between the two friends and the bank of the river.

Ulf laid his finger on his lips—at the same time whispering—“ One of thy lazy landswomen, I take it, singing a ditty to her sheep”—

They crept on a few paces—and Ulf added—“ No—by my troth—the words are Danish—oho ! then I wis I know the singer—listen !”

Godwin did listen ; but his heart beat as tumultuously at Ulf's intimation, as though it had contained the most stirring tidings—the reader will hardly think it worth while to guess why it should so beat—but certainly the voice was a very sweet one—and the words—as far as he heard them—ran somehow thus—

* * * * *

And lovely looks the sunlit river,
When 'neath the winds its wavelets quiver—
And lightly sound the tiny trills
The birdlings maken with their bills :
Light and lovely—sweet and sheen
All things in the summer been.

But lighter than the tiny trills
The birdlings maken with their bills—
And lovelier than the sunlit river,
When 'neath the winds its wavelets quiver,—
And sweeter than the sigh that heaves
From the living rose's leaves—
And sheenier than the heaven's height,
When all its star-lamps are a-light—
Are voice, and smile, and breath, and eyes
Of———heigh—ho—aw—yaw!

The singer broke off with a sigh, which ended in a most deliberate and sonorous yawn—and Ulf scarcely stifling his laughter, beckoned Godwin on a little further.

They advanced, and peeping round the thorn bushes, beheld, to the young Saxon's excessive wonderment, lying at full length upon the grass bank, which just there overhung the water, the slim and elegant figure of a man. He was

clad in a dress of scarlet silk—the whole of which fitted close to his well-shaped body—his shoes were of yellow leather—and round his neck he bore several chains of silver and gold—of the lightest possible fabrication of that period : between him and the grass was spread a long large mantle of dark stuff, which was loosely tied over his right shoulder ; he was supporting himself on his left elbow ; and in the same hand was twirling a large buttercup round his lips—while in the right he bore a scarlet silk bonnet, adorned with a tuft of raven’s feathers, with which he was slowly and languidly fanning his face—which was turned away from the intruders.

“ Knowest thou the butterfly ?” whispered Ulf.

“ How should I ?” asked Godwin.—

Ulf. Why thou hast known it in the grub—stop a bit—

He stooped and picked up a large flint, that lay at his feet, and flung it over the man’s head into the water :—wherein it fell—unseen by him—but not unheard—for it made a splendid splash.

The day-dreamer slightly started—stopped—twirling and fanning—and exclaimed—“My life!—what a fish!”

Ulf burst out laughing, and said—“A fiendish bad swimmer, Haco”—

Haco laughed too, as without turning his head he answered—“Why—it was thou, kinsman:” his laugh though was much more faint than when he had been on board.

Ulf. Nay—hardly so, Haco—unless like the Elf Holdbrecht, I could be in water and on earth at the same time.—Godwin, didst thou ever see such a lazybones?

Haco. Ah! is the young Seaxon with thee? —(he turned his head and nodded to Godwin) now, an *thou* hadst jumped into the water, friend, I should not have wondered me—seeing swimming is after thy kind: but for Ulf to do such a thing—is—truly—ya—aw!—astounding.—

Ulf. What the devil art thou doing here?

Haco. I am so hot—

Ulf. And so thou’rt lying on a southern bank, by way of cooling thyself?

Haco. I might ha’ taken cold had I lain in

the shade—but the sun does in truth get grievously into one's eyes, I find.—

Ulf. Ha! ha! ha! why dost not get out of the way, then?

Haco. Ha! ha! ha—yaw! why should I get out of the way—when I can shut mine eyes.— I *am* right sleepy.

Godw. By St. Luke! there's a snake close to thy head, Haco.

Ulf laughed—and Haco asked—"Is there!—where?"—and just turned his head round.

Ulf.—There is tho'—in truth—

He sprang back, for the reptile, the existence of which he had before thought was the mere creation of a jest, was very near his own feet, and still nearer the head of Haco, to whom he now cried out—"Up—up—man—the worm is going to dart at thee"—

Haco said—"Aye—an adder!—How she sishes"—and very deliberately pounced down upon the viper with the bonnet, which he held in his right hand—

Both Godwin and Ulf cried out to him to take heed—

“She’ll sting thee thro’ the silk”—exclaimed the latter—

“She’ll be right cunning then”—replied the other, coolly—at the same time lifting up the serpent to their view—as he held it between his bent fore-finger and thumb by the neck—while its body kept twisting and coiling round his wrist with a horribly wrathful energy.—

Ulf, who understood as much about snakes, as Godwin did a few days back of scale-armour,—was still in great alarm lest his kinsman should be wounded, firmly believing that the viper had the power, as it evidently had the will to do him some mischief with its tail—but Haco said—“Nay—nay—my lad—I didn’t wont, when I was a boy, to go adder catching with old Rudolph the Swede, for nought:”—while he said these words, he had risen upon his legs, and at the same, time by the pressure of his finger and thumb, strangled the adder, whose black venom oozed out of its bleeding jaws: with the other hand he untwisted the reptile’s coils—continuing—“Thou’rt a fool of a snake to come and bother man in this way—to the water-

fiend with thee—(and he flung the lank and lifeless reptile into the river—) And now what shall we do, Ulf? for I cannot get ridden of you twain, as easily as I have of yon beast, I fear.”—

Ulf, from sheer ignorance was as much astonished by a deed, of which Godwin, from a greater knowledge of such matters thought, very little, as the latter would have been by the exhibition of Haco’s strength and activity during the sea-fights, had he previously seen him in the affectedly languid condition, which it was his constant habit to assume—and under this impression, Ulf, without answering Haco’s question, replied—

“By my word of truth, Haco—but thou art a brave man”—

“And by mine, Ulf, thou art a fool”—answered Haco—

Ulf, who somehow thought this repartee inferred an imputation on his own bravery, as having attributed more danger to a feat than it really possessed—asked very tartly—“How so?”—

At which Haco calmly laughed—and re-

peated his question — “What shall we do? — I’m too warm to walk — and thou too hot to talk.” —

“Oh !” — said Ulf.

And “Oh !” said Haco —

Whereupon Godwin, that he might have some share in such an interesting conversation, asked — “Knows either of you what time of day it is?”

But they either knew nothing about the matter, or were not courteous enough to return an answer ; — but Ulf burst out laughing, and said — “Well — Haco — thou wert right — I *am* a fool —”

He took hold of Haco’s hand ; and shook it so heartily, that the latter cried out — “Life and body ! shake not so hard — have some thought of a man’s nerves” —

“Pooh !” — said Ulf — “a man’s nonsense — come up with me to the King’s : thou eatest with him this evening?” —

Haco. — Why — I think so — but it cannot surely be meal-time yet — truly, what with fighting and eating, a man gets little rest in this mad world.

Ulf. Not yet—I take it—but the King will want our rede, belike.

Haco.—Then want may for once be the King's King—no—no—ha ! ha ! ha !—I cannot do and think in one day—and I've done enough this—however I'll saunter up with you to the King's—just to hear you all prattle—or may be to toy away an hour with thy sister, Ulf.

Ulf laughed and said—“Aye—aye—I wish I may catch thee toying with her”—

And Godwin, who did not laugh—wished Haco at the devil—but did not tell him so.

They were now slowly walking back towards the town—Haco, every now and then, uttering the most languid invectives against the heat, and requesting his companions not to go at the pace of running footmen.—

“By the way,” said Ulf, “what hast thou done with the lock of hair, that I cut off for thee this morning?”

Haco. Truly *by the way* indeed—kinsman—I'll tell thee what—thou shall do slaughter with me some odd day, for that misdeed—

Ulf.—When it is cooler weather, Haco—

Haco. Oh ! troth—aye—we'll wait till win-

ter, and meanwhile I'll give the lock—see
—here it is, poor thing—to Goda—and

Ulf. Wilt thou?—

Haco. In sooth, yes—and this same even too
—and before thine own eyes.—

Ulf. We shall see—

Haco. Thou shalt—unless thou shut them, as
I do, when the sun gets in them—and I will
moreover dit a lay, about it—the gift, that is
—and it shall begin—

Lovely lips have sigh'd for thee,

Have sought for thee,

Have sued for thee,—

Lovely lips have sued for thee—

Many a time and oft :

But mine have still said *nay* to them—

Said *nay* to them

Said *nay*

Ulf. Pooh—booh!—said *bray* to them.

Haco.—*Bray*?

Ulf.—Aye—*nay* sounds too like a horse's
speech—surely thou speakest in thine own—

“O—oh!” drawl'd out Haco—putting his fin-
ger to the side of his nose, and winking at God-

win behind Ulf's back ; he laughed good-humouredly, and then said very solemnly—"My dear friends—I believe that even hearts have been broken—or at least much cracked—about that said ringlet of mine."

"Fopling!" muttered Godwin, his patience utterly exhausted by all this nonsense—

Ulf stared round at him with astonishment on his countenance ; and when Godwin turned his head, and caught this look—he also saw Haco's face thrust forward beyond Ulf's—wearing the same expression, but so burlesqued by the extreme elevation of his eye-brows and the contraction of his lips, that despite of himself Godwin was forced to burst out laughing ; —which set both the others off too.

They arrived at length, tolerably good friends, at Knute's tent—before which, as they had expected, they found most of the leaders of the army in consultation with the King ; who said on seeing Ulf—"Soh ! brother-in-law—thou comest somewhat of the latest : —we have needed thy rede here—

Ulf bowed with a sneer on his lips; which was distantly reflected by a frown on the King's forehead.—The former took his seat however in silence—and listened, seemingly with attention, to the debate that was going on as to the expediency of remaining where they were, or marching still further westward.

At last Knute, vexed at Ulf's petulant silence, beckoned him up to him—and Godwin overheard the King say—"Why what aileth thee, Ulf—art playing the dumby again?"—and Ulf's answer—"The speech of a coward could avail little"—he then saw the King start back and draw Ulf aside, where they remained in earnest conversation for a few moments, which ended in Knute's laughingly shaking his brother-in-law by the hand—and they returned to the table, Ulf giving a significant and self-sufficient side nod at Godwin.—

The debate was now resumed—and Ulf for once happened to agree with the King's view of the case, namely, that they had better wait the arrival of the English King;—whether he did so from conviction, or prudence, it is not

for me to determine. This counsel was finally determined upon :—the assembly broke up—if such could be called breaking up ; as by far the greater part of those present accepted the King's general invitation, of taking their evening meal with him in his tent—whither they now adjourned.

Just as they were going in, Knute beckoned Godwin to his side—laid hold of his arm—and in a low voice expressed his hearty thanks for the service, which he had been told, he had rendered him.—

Ulf, who was walking by Godwin's side, whispered to him—" I knew that was the best channel for the tidings to flow to his ear."

And the courtiers, who knew nothing of the cause for this hidden familiarity between the King and the young Saxon, looked inquiringly and dissatisfied at one another ; and some even went so far as to whisper something about the caprice of Kings—but this was done in a very low tone—and nothing particular, after all could have been meant, by such general expressions ; as those who uttered them were among the most obsequious in their de-

meanour to the monarch during the course of the evening.—

Knute still leaning on Godwin's arm, they entered the tent together—and found the ladies there—and Haco with them. Even the King seemed startled at seeing him there—and much more so was Godwin, who nearly drew blood from his lip, out of sheer vexation of spirit.—

Haco, however, seemed nothing disconcerted by the event—but making a low and graceful bow to Knute, he said—“I hope my King will forgive this freedom—but of a truth, I found the debate out yonder something warm and wearisome, so I came in hither to cool myself.”

Knute nodded very superciliously—and went to his seat at the table—at his left he placed Godwin—while Aelfgiva occupied his right. During the meal Godwin's attention was unpleasantly divided by those, which he observed the King was paying to Aelfgiva on one side—and Haco to Goda—(by whose side he had contrived to seat himself)—on the other.—He observed too, that Ulf more than once raised up his finger to his kinsman, as though to

warn him—but the warning only seemed to have the effect of rendering him more persevering in his civilities to the lady—so that by the time supper was over, there was not a place of evil—either real or imaginary—to which Godwin had not in his wishes sent the Danish puppy. At last he saw, that—even while Ulf's eyes were full upon them—Haco drew from beneath his doublet the identical lock of hair, about which there had been so much talk—and handed it to Goda—who, blushing, and directing a half glance under her eye-lashes at her brother—took it : and to crown Godwin's excessive annoyance, he turned, and beheld Ulf smiling, as though he really enjoyed the scene.

Half choking with passion and jealousy, and in his heart cursing poor Goda for the arrantest coquette that ever lived—he leant his head in his two hands, supporting his elbows on the table—and remained in this position—gnawing at his own hands for a considerable time—heedless of the rising revelry that sounded round him. In the middle, however, of a loud shout that had followed probably some toast or other—he heard—as Aelfgiva had that morning

told him, a whisper might be best heard during a tempest—his own name pronounced in a soft voice at his ear:—he started up—but instead of turning round to where the voice came from, his attention was at once rivetted by the scene of joyous tumults before him:—it was quite dusk—but he could plainly see that all around were standing—emptied goblets and drawn swords were waving in every direction—while every man was shouting a loud “hurrah!” at the topmast of his lungs—and many of them aiding the clamour, by striking the bottom of their cups, or the blades of their weapons, upon the ringing board.—Godwin rose instinctively, and saw that the women no longer occupied their places; unused as he was to such scenes of festivity, he somehow guessed that it was their health that had been so tumultuously toasted; and perhaps this guess was a little assisted by the cry of “The Ladies! The Ladies!” which he heard mingling with the else undistinguishable riot:—he joined instinctively, but not very loudly in the shout, which was immediately echoed by a laugh from two or three to his left, and he heard one say—“Why the

Saxon Eorl has drunk to his own health—I thought he was gone.”—

Godwin felt confused and turned to his left, and there saw, grouped round the King, and conversing with him, the females, for whose sake he thought this storm of gallantry had been raised; at the same moment he again heard the same soft voice, saying; “I would speak with Earl Gudín an hour hence—alone: there is an oak between this and the river—there!”

While these words were uttering, Godwin—fascinated by them, and intuitively fearing lest by at all changing his position he should lose a syllable—had not stirred; when they ceased he turned his head round rapidly; but could only see that the women were retiring at a side passage, close at his elbow; he could, however, distinguish the features of none of them.

The King resumed his seat—the nobles did so too—and the loud din suddenly died away into the indistinct buss of general conversation.

Godwin sat abstracted and thoughtful, unnoticing what was going on about him, and

luckily unnoticed by others : his whole heart and mind were engrossed by the words he had just heard, and by the most different endeavours to guess at the speaker of them : the language had been pure Saxon ; but his own name had been pronounced in the Danish dialect : was the speaker a Dane speaking Saxon ?—or a Saxon speaking Danish ?—was it Aelfgiva or Goda ?—for by some trick of fancy, not perhaps overtempered by humility, he at once attributed the words to one of these ladies ; then the notion did occur to him, that this was a rather presumptuous supposition ; and he then thought that it might have been a jest of one of their maidens ; but this was rather the suggestion of his modesty than of his imagination ; for he abandoned it at once as highly improbable, and recurred to what he could not help however owning to himself was next to impossible, the idea that it must have been one of the before-mentioned ladies. Of a sudden his old fancy recurred to him, that the voice might have been that of some unearthly visitor—and for no good purpose—then he recollected his fa-

ther's whisper in the tent the night he had been taken by his countrymen—could this have been he?—in the midst of the Danish camp!—impossible—unless indeed he had some very strong motive—and what could that be? and he set himself sedulously to work to try and guess at the motive for such an extraordinary act—when it suddenly occurred to him that though his father's whisper had been very low on that occasion; yet it had been both in sound and tone, thoroughly distinguishable from the one he had just heard—which was undoubtedly a woman's:—and as soon as he had settled there could be no doubt on this point he remembered how he had been that morning deceived by Haco's voice—and for aught he knew his whisper might be as melodious as his singing: was it then a joke of his rival's—for so he already set him down to be—and the thought of this sent the blood rushing back upon his heart; whence in a moment it gushed again through every vein with the impetuosity of a torrent, as the thought flashed across him, that it might have been no joke—but an earnest challenge from

the young Dane—to meet him for the purposes of doing deadly battle with him—he looked earnestly through the gloom ; though now in parts dissipated, yet on the whole rendered more indistinct by the introduction of a few lights ; he gazed at the spot, where Haco had sat—he was no longer there—he strained his eyes round the tent to try if he could discover him any where else—but he could not: whither could he be gone ?—perhaps after the ladies—perhaps—but unable to bear the conflict of these incongruous fancies, heated with liquor as he was—long—long before the appointed hour had elapsed, Godwin escaped from the tent—and sought and soon found the designated spot.

CHAPTER XI.

It was a lovely night, or rather twilight, for it was that season of the year, when so few hours intervene between the setting and the rising of the sun, that the lingering light he leaves at his departure is triumphant over darkness, and remains to mingle with his returning splendour. Not a cloud was there in the sky, scarcely a breath of air was there abroad: the queen of night looked pale, as though with fear that her reign was ending; her court was that evening but thinly attended; none but the brightest of her stars were present, and they too were pale, and trembling:—so beautiful and tranquil was the scene, that as

Godwin stood beneath the gigantic oak, listening to the rustling of its shining leaves, that seemed to stir of their own will—to the rippling flow of the glittering river—and to the song of a nightingale, who, nearly the last of her tribe, was breathing her sad farewell from the woods on the opposite bank—and even the shouts of the revellers in the camp, coming at intervals upon his ear, softened and sweetened by distance, were not without adding a pleasing effect ; as he listened to these sounds, he could not but own the spell of so much beauty and tranquillity, which mingled with and became part of his own feelings : and all thoughts of evil—all of fear were gone from out his breast.

Thus it is, that the external effects of nature have over the mind of man a power as various as it is extensive ;—frequently subduing the most turbulent passions, or on the other hand, exciting the wildest emotions :—for there appears to be an invisible but indissoluble link, that binds the human mind, not alone with the matter, wherein it is inherent—but also with all the vast material world around

us ; the variety of its workings, even upon the same individual, may be attributable to many causes : a different state of temperament, a different state of merely physical constitution will cause scenes of the same class, or even the self-same scene to produce quite different effects upon the mind ; silence and solitude will at one time tranquilize, at another madden : there is much too in the novelty of any situation ; if the heart is taken by surprise by any unexpected effect of nature, it may be weaned away from its then predominant feeling, however strong that may have been before : if we are wandering forth in moodiness or wrath, and suddenly come upon a new and fine prospect—or are overtaken by a storm—or surprised by an unexpectedly brilliant sunset—the probable effect would be—always dependent on our physical state—that our previous thoughts would be absorbed in sensations of admiration—excitement—or tranquillity : but if—in the same state of mind—we had *sought* such scenes, in the hope of changing or modifying the nature of our feelings, almost to a certainty we should

be disappointed in the result.—It seems as though nature would allow of no controul—of no dictation—her influence over men's mind is independent of his volition—nor will she permit him to interfere therewith.

As Godwin now sat upon the gnarled roots of the old oak, all his former conjectures, as to who the whisperer in the tent might be, rose to his mind; but gradually—distinctly—and calmly—one by one he discussed their plausibility; not omitting the supernatural agency, to which he was strongly inclined to attribute the sounds—but it now seemed to his hopes, that the object of such a visitant would probably be for good, rather than for evil; or at the worst to warn him of some evil, which he might avoid:—the thought of its having been Haco did indeed for the moment ruffle him; but he speedily decided upon the improbability of this supposition—and having done this, it was no difficult task for him to resolve, even should it have been he, to behave with suitable dignity and tranquillity on the occasion.—The conclusion at which he at last arrived was that the voice had been Aelfgiva's; how he came

to this opinion it might be difficult to determine ; for the only (and not very logical) train of reason he adopted was that the language had been Saxon—and that he knew of no other Saxon female being in the camp :—and he got over the difficulty of the Danish pronunciation of his name by supposing it must have been a mistake—that in the confusion he had heard that one word incorrectly ; and he had been so used for the last few days to hear his name thus pronounced, that this mistake was exceedingly natural—at least so he argued.

As this point was now settled most thoroughly to Godwin's satisfaction, there was nothing left for him but to be very impatient at the non-arrival of Aelfgiva, and to wonder proportionably what she possibly could have to communicate to him :—as this impatience grew upon him, he became more and more restless — walked up and down under the oak, and in fancy went through every mode of greeting that imagination could suggest to him — at one moment, he was suing at her feet—at the next, she at his—a thorough explanation however was the result of a few

minutes' conversation—she easily accounted for her former pride, which had always warred against her inclinations, *that* she now frankly confessed—for aware of her own high birth, how could she encourage hopes in a poor swain, which, to all human appearance, never could be realized? but now the case was different; she saw in him a lover, whose station offered no impediment to the return of his affection; and by this avowal—interspersed by a few words of kindness—she made ample compensation for the former coldness and haughtiness of her demeanour:—and the natural result of all this was a full and hearty reconciliation with his first Love.

Just as this was effected to his heart's content, he happened to look round in a direction, where he had just before been gazing—and a female, clad in white, was close at his side.

The apparition gave him as sudden a shock as though a bucket of cold water had been emptied upon his head—he stood still—and sank reverentially and instinctively on one knee—Aelfgiva had flown from his thoughts—it *was* a fairy stood before him:—his limbs

quaked—his flesh quivered—but it was not with fear—his unquailing eye was fixed on the figure before him — waiting in awe till she should speak to him.

She stood exactly between the young Saxon and the moon, whose rays shining through her long black hair, and loose white drapery, aided Godwin's imagination in giving her a supernatural look; and this was yet increased by the greenish glare, which, as she fronted the west, irradiated her features, and lit up her sparkling eyes. She waited so—nearly a minute—which seemed at least fifteen to Godwin—without speaking; her lips though were smiling—he thought beneficently—but it is by no means certain that some little feminine archness had not thus wreathed them, at the evident mistake into which the young earl had fallen; for at last in tones, that were nearly akin to laughter, Goda said in her native Danish;—"Nay, rise, Earl Gudin: thou shouldst keep thy knee for the true fairy of this tree."

Godwin did as he was bidden: the spell was over—he rose to his feet—and to tell the truth

felt a little confused at his own palpable error : and yet if beauty may claim the homage of man's devotion—as it ever has done—and surely ever will do—Godwin need have felt no shame at kneeling at Goda's feet—for she stood there as beautiful a being, as ever in the loveliness of youth was worshipped beneath a July moon. Her face and the singular hue of her eyes and hair—singular for those climes and times, when the blood of the southerners had not mingled with those of the north—these have been before noticed : to these may be added that she was tall, above the ordinary height of woman, but withal so exquisitely formed, and so lightly graceful in all her movements, that, unless when immediately contrasted with shorter women, connoisseurs (for there were such even in those days) had been known to declare that she was rather under the middling size. Godwin was no connoisseur—and perhaps he was not much to be pitied on that score—he only knew that a very beautiful woman was standing before him—a woman, with whom he had begun to have several

violent indications of falling in love—and that he could not conceive what on earth she could want with him : he tried to express this same thought—of course in more courteous language—but could only stammer out the words ;—“ May I ask..if..it is the Lady Goda ?”

Goda. Even so, Eorl Gudín—and I doubt not, thou wonderest no little, that she should have asked for this meeting.

Godw. I..that is..if..yes.

Goda. Well, Gudín : I will tell thee why I have so done—and trust thou wilt not deem ill of me therefore. Thou hast this day saved my life—thou hast before saved that of my brother. I owe thee largely for these deeds.

Godw. Nay, lady, I did but my duty.

Goda. That cannot lessen my thankfulness to thee, Gudín ; and that thankfulness may, I hope, plead for the strong and deep share I take in thy welfare.

She paused a short interval—and Godwin, who had been deeply engaged by gazing on his own

feet—looked up into her face—and said—“ Indeed, lady. .indeed and troth I could not. . there is no need. .I beg thee go on, dear lady.”

Goda. Then, Gudin, much as I owe to thee, —being here ; I will say the seeing thee here among my landsmen, gives me great pain.

Godw. Oh ! why, lady?

Goda. They are in weapons against thy fatherland, Gudin—and thou art aiding them. Forgive me, if what I say wounds thee : but I cannot think how a man can draw sword against his own landsmen—there are many Saxons, who have, it is true, joined our King in so doing—but they have all done so from bad feelings—to wreak some poor revenge—to work out some paltry plot—but thou art too young, I hope, Gudin, to be swayed by such feelings—why fightest thou against thy fatherland ?

Godwin thought a moment and then answered—“ At my father’s bidding I do it, lady.”

This short and simple answer produced a powerful revulsion in Goda’s feelings : she had, as she herself said, taken a powerful and pro-

found interest in the young Saxon—warrantable certainly by the great services he had rendered to her and Ulf:—her high notions of honour had been hurt at the unpatriotic conduct of one, who though her senior in years, was much her junior in experience and worldly wisdom—she hoped indeed he might have good reason for adopting this conduct—but she greatly feared also that he had been seduced into it by her brother—and in this case, she felt it a duty both to him and Godwin, to open the eyes of the latter to the error of his present proceedings—she felt that by so doing she might indeed lose a friend—at least the society of one—but she felt certain also, that she could not but gain his esteem: the womanly love of exercising a moral influence over a young man—an influence of the most happy or baneful effects, according as it is well or ill wielded—this had in great measure prompted her to take the present step—but with this motive was largely mingled the hope, already hinted at, that Godwin might be able amply to justify his conduct—whereby she would have retained his society,

and been able to bestow on him that warm esteem, which, while his actions remained under the slightest shade of suspicion she could not possibly do. This hope was now fully satisfied, for—so high and indisputable was the veneration paid at these times to parental authority—that a father's command would have authorised and justified much more singular and seemingly unaccountable deeds than that of Godwin's bearing arms against his countrymen, for so many Saxons openly did the same, that by a mind less nice and scrupulous than was Goda's, no such account would have been required: but satisfactory as this explanation was—strange to say—it disconcerted and distressed the Danish lady—it was in fact too satisfactory—it left nothing to argue about—nothing further to question—in any other reasons, that Godwin might have given, something of this nature there must have been—this she had—if not calculated on—at least naturally expected—and this would have vindicated her present interference from the charge of too great intrusion: but now there was nothing left for her to say; and she felt that she had

taken a step, which many might think unbecoming her sex and rank, and which even in Godwin's eyes must at least appear to have been particularly unnecessary ; and this greatly distressed her naturally proud spirit. A question might indeed here be raised, how far Godwin spoke strict truth on the present occasion—and it is feared the reply would not be over-favourable to our hero : for in the first place it may be remembered, that Ulfnoth's *counsel* to his son was not a command to take arms against his countrymen—but merely advice to remain among the Danes ; and in the second, it may be very much doubted (even putting the fact of Godwin's bearing arms out of the case) whether his motive for remaining in the Danish host wholly proceeded from what his father had said to him : it is true he had not been long with them, and during that short time, he had been hurried by circumstances into acts, which if cooler deliberation had been afforded him, he would probably have shrunk from ; but the revulsion of feelings produced by the sight of Aelfgiva, and the sudden passion, he had fancifully conceived for Goda,

had kept his mind in a state of bewildering tumult : indeed scarcely at any other period, but when he stood on the very verge of the deed, had the thought even occurred to him that he *was* in arms against his country—and it has been shown how that thought was checked and stifled by a rapid succession of stirring events : still all this explanation cannot exculpate Godwin from the charge of disingenuousness in his present answer—and the more so, as it must be owned, he was himself aware of the fact, and had in truth (or rather untruth) moulded that answer in a manner he thought best calculated to put an end to Goda's objection.

After nearly a minute's pause—she replied—
“ Indeed ! at thy father's bidding !—so—It is well.—He, I wis, had good grounds for bidding thee.”

Godw. I know, not, lady—he told me indeed that—

Goda. Nay—that I ask not—will not hear :—quite enough, that thou doest what thy father bids thee—farewell.

Godwin was startled by the change of her

manner—it had previously been marked by a slight hesitation, and much kindliness: it was now most decided and chilly:—he was startled though by it, into energy—he cried out;—“Leave me not, lady—dear lady, leave me not.”—As he repeated these words he dropt on one knee, and seized the hem of her scarf in his clasped hands.

Goda. Rise, I beg thee, rise—why should I stay?—pray rise.

Godwin let go her scarf—but did not rise: he continued—his hands still clasped;—“Leave me not just yet—I thought thou wert kindly—friendly towards me—and the thought made me so happy.”

Goda. I *am* kindly towards thee, Gudin.

Godw. Aye, so is thy brother, lady—and so am I to him—but that is not the kindliness I long for—either to have or to give—it is not—oh, lady, I yearn for some one to love.

Goda. To love, Gudin?

Godw. Oh—yes, yes—be not wrathful with me—but I am so lonely—so quite alone in this world—lonely as the poor bird whose nest hath been plundered—whose mate hath been

killed—I am sure thou wouldst feel with me, if thou knewest all,—but thou dost, lady—the Seaxon—

Godwin could proceed no further, but hiding his face in his hands, gave way to the tearful torrent of his grief.—

Goda—the current of her thoughts thus again suddenly—perhaps unpleasantly—checked and changed—exclaimed—“The Lady Aelfgiva !”

Godw.—Aye—she—she—the proud—the scornful—she scorned my love—she trampled upon my heart, as though it had been a worm in her path—she was too proud to listen to a lowly neatherd—as I was then thought ;—that is over though—and 'tis well it is so—but I am still lonely—and need a being to love—lady—lady—sister of mine only friend—may I—dare I love thee ?—

Goda.—Me !—*Me !!*—thinkest thou then so poorly of Goda, that thou wouldst shift thy heart's love from a Seaxon Cucquean upon her— ?—

Godw.—Oh, no—Goda—Lady Goda—no—say not so—Aelfgiva—is she what thou sayest ?—she never had my heart's love—she would

not have it—she spurned it—let her go then—I will not think of her—she was not worthy of me—even of poor me—if she were what thou sayest—and I see it is so—(Godwin had risen to his feet, and spoken the last words proudly enough—he now humbled his tone again—as he continued—) But if thou—of whom I am indeed so unworthy—if thou wouldst but let me love thee—that is all I ask.

Goda, who somehow was more gratified at hearing Godwin speak ill of Aelfgiva than she had any good reason to be, replied—“Nay, Gudwin—I cannot let thee—either way—neither to love me—nor from loving me—”

Godw.—Oh, yes,—surely yes—I only ask if I may love thee—say—I may.—

He clasped her hand—but instantly let it go again, as though he had done wrong—

Goda. Nay—were I to say so—it would be giving thee a hope—which I should not mean to fulfil—

Godw. No—no—indeed I would not take it so—I only want to know that my love would not anger thee—would it?—yonder Dane loves thee—may not I?—

Goda. Who?—

Godw. He of the fair golden locks—I forget his name—oh! Haco——

Goda. He!—ha! ha!—(she laughed slightly and scornfully—and then went on)—Haco loves nothing but himself—and could love nought but was like himself—I should be sore grieved, if I thought he loved me.

Godw.—He does though—he does—how could he otherwise indeed?—when he may sit near thee—and talk with thee—thee smiling on him—and may give thee love tokens.—

Goda. — What!—(this was said sharply and angrily—for Godwin had certainly used a rather strong expression) — What love-token gave Haco ever to me?—has he said he ever did?

Godw. Surely, Lady,—surely I myself saw thee take a ringlet of his own hair, from his own hands, this same evening.—

Goda.— Oh! that!—I forgot — see—here it is—(she drew it from her girdle—) and now there—(she flung it up into the air, where it was soon wafted out of sight by the rising wind—) but that was no love-token, Gudwin—

I took in sooth at his earnest begging—for that he told me he had a wager upon my so doing, with my brother Ulf, who had cut it off, he told me, as he slept—no, were Haco to talk of love to Goda, she would in truth be angered—but we will not go back to that now—let us rather part.—

Godw.—Oh—no—no—tarry yet a little while.—

Goda.—Nay, it is getting late in the night—and see the sky is quite over-cast; and by the quick rustling of the leaves, we are about to have rain.—

Godwin looked up, and though he would have given worlds—if he had had any—to have refuted Goda's proposition about the weather; yet,—whether from the habit of truth-telling, (so lately exemplified,) or from a natural dislike of impugning his weather-wisdom—he could not bring himself, like Juliet, to swear downright against the positive truth of appearances:—and he was, perhaps, the less inclined to venture this, as besides the evident change in the heavens, which had gradually taken place unobserved by Godwin, a few large drops

of rain were already pattering among the leaves over head—he had nothing, therefore, but to sigh and say—“We are indeed, I fear.”—

Goda. Good night, then, Gudín—we part friends.

Godw.—Oh—I hope so, lady.—Good night—I may not love thee, then?—

Goda. I will not *say* thou mayest.—

Godw.—But thou wilt not say I may *not*.—

Goda. I say nothing—good night. Sleep well.—

She held out her hand to him—which timidly and tremulously he bent his lips upon. She then left him: and Godwin, having watched her till he could see her no longer, wandered about in the rain, for an hour and three quarters,—and perhaps a few odd minutes,—before he could find his way to her brother’s tent.

CHAPTER XII.

FROM the consideration that it never should be the ambition of a tale-writer to invade the province of the legitimate historian, (though I cannot, perhaps, stand quite acquitted from the charge of having lately made a feeble effort in that quarter,) I now refrain from following our Saxon hero through the various battles between his countrymen and the Danes, in all of which he more or less distinguished himself; at the battle of Assandun in particular, where, by the again repeated treachery of Edric, the English were entirely routed, and as old William Malmsbury says, the flower of the no-

bility of the land perished, Godwin succeeded, at the imminent risk of his life, in saving the consecrated standard of the Danes; from the appearance of which, their celebrated leader Thurchil, had, in the morning, promised them certain victory:—the soothsayer being also a bard, Godwin's exploit was sung by him in verse, and his name soon became familiar in the camp, and a favourite watch-word among the common men. Nor, while he thus rose in estimation with his own sex, did he lose ground with the other.—Goda and he were frequently together; and his love for her as it gradually assumed a more manly tone than it had worn at its commencement, evidently gave her no displeasure. Through her endeavours, also, an interview was brought about between Godwin and Aelfgiva, who was now fairly domesticated in the royal household, (or rather *tent hold*), and in no unequivocal situation: but such things, though not perhaps admired, were certainly not so much reprobated then, as they would be—could they, by any possibility, occur—in our moral times; for surely, if now a female were to suffer her reputation to be sullied, especially

by royalty, she would at once be scouted out of all society.

Goda had brought about this meeting, neither to try her lover's firmness, nor to show any triumph over the latter lady; though had she known less of their respective characters, the experiment would have been either a dangerous, or at least, a vain one; but she calculated on the result which actually took place. Godwin proffered the hand of friendship to the Saxon lady, who coldly and ceremoniously took it, and assured Godwin that she did ever entertain the highest esteem for him—which was at any rate more than he could have brought himself to say for her.

After the battle of Assandun, Edmond had retired to Gloucester, and before Knute could get up with him, the English King, by his activity, was enabled again to take the field, with a considerable body of men.

Knute, who arrived over night, immediately pitched his tents, and gave orders to his men to prepare for battle at day-break. It was a hazardous experiment of the Dane; for, exhausted as his men were by fatigue, and di-

minished in number, he was well aware that if the results of the next day's conflict should be unfavourable to him, his ruin was certain: for he had left his ships behind him to sail round the Land's End—and had, therefore, neither means of retreat, nor of recruiting his army in case of discomfiture: these arguments were strongly urged by several of his officers; but contrary to his usual custom, the young Danish King listened to their arguments with patience, and even condescended to answer some of them. He observed, that the situation of the English monarch was considerably worse than his own—that although his army was the more numerous of the two, it had been hastily concocted of raw and undisciplined recruits—and that these once worsted, Edmond could never again entertain any hopes of meeting him in the field; he reminded them, that after their late brilliant success at Assandun, followed as it had been, by the ceding of London, and all the principal cities and towns in his march, it would be to tarnish that brilliancy, to hesitate for a day to encounter the foe; besides the evident advantage that delay would give

them of augmenting and organizing their troops. Whether his royal arguments were good or not, does not much signify, as of course they were adopted.

But though Knute was thus calm in his outward demeanour, he was anything but so at heart; he well knew the extent of the danger he was about to incur, and his courage rather arose from dogged defiance of that danger, than from cool and calculating determination. After the assembly had broken up, he detained his brother-in-law and Godwin with him for some time, chatting over the most common-place topics; and it was not till the thought occurred to him, that this might appear in their eyes, as very trifling and absurd, that he dismissed them for "all night."

Not even then did he retire to rest, but for half an hour continued pacing up and down, in his tent, revolving in his mind all the chances of the coming morrow—blaming himself for risking so much upon a single hazard—and then angry for having blamed himself; for the first time in his life he felt a strange but strong awe at the idea of the coming fight—perhaps

because for the first time in his life he was thinking at all concerning the matter,—and he began to imagine that war was not only a very useless, but rather a sanguinary invention, and that the happiness of men might be somehow better secured, than by setting them to slay one another with as little remorse or feeling, as wild beasts destroy each other for the sake of food. But the more he felt this imagination stealing upon him, the more he strove to struggle with and conquer it; and it is well he did so; or we might have had Knute figuring—if at all—in the pages of history, as a mere philosopher or philanthropist—instead of his being the brave—the great—the rich—the pious King, that various chroniclers have designated him.

But the struggle in his mind was too much for him—he required opener space to breathe and move in; he sallied out therefore into the open air, without any fixed purpose whither he was going. The sentinel at the royal tent, and those with whom he fell in with in his route, knowing his person, (for he was undistinguished by any regal habiliments, being clad in a plain

brown leathern jerkin and hose, which he wore under his armour) allowed him to pass on, without question or observation, except such as they made to themselves as to the odd fancy, which had induced their King to wander about alone at that time of night. At last Knute stood before his brother-in-law's tent, and would have at once entered, but the sentry on guard placed his halbert across the entry, so as to bar his ingress.

"What wantest here?" asked the man.

"To go in," answered the King.

"Canst not go in here—Iarl Ulf's tent."

"I know it, good friend.—I will go in!"

"Ah! thou mayest will—but thou shalt not."

"What! Churl!—oh —aye —The ravens raven for the martlets."

"Well—I know that: what of it?"

"Why it is the watch-word, fool, is it not?"

"Well, I know that too—*fool*—and what of that? That shall not pass thee in here."

"Sword of Surtur! knowest thou *me*?"

"No. How the sword should I?"

"I am the King:—Knute the son of Svein."

"That's a black lie.—Make me believe that

King Knute would go about this time o' the night in that gear and this gait—and I will give thee good leave to throttle me.”

“By my troth! I will try and make thee believe it then;” and so saying, the King, who, though rather amused at first, had now lost all his little stock of patience, sprung at the man's throat; but the active Dane evaded the gripe, though Knute succeeded in grasping his halbert with both hands, and they began a tough struggle for the possession of the weapon—the man shouting at the pitch of his voice :

“Ho! betrayal here! betrayal.”

“Troth! I think so!”—exclaimed Ulf, who half undressed, and followed by Godwin in the same plight, now sprang from the tent, and knocked the pertinacious Dane to the ground: “Why what is all this?”—he continued—“King Knute here? struggling with this hind!”

Knute. Nay—harm him not—brother—harm him not—he hath but done his duty.

Ulf. Duty—forsooth!—I will teach the knave his duty—an I catch him.

But both the threat and the intercession were equally in vain; for as soon as the man

had learnt by inference, that it really was the King with whom he had been so roughly parleying, he started upon his legs, and ran off with all his might and main ; and has never been heard of again from that time to this ; —and very likely never will be.

Ulf. Is ought amiss, King ?

Knute. Nay — but I was weary of being alone.

Ulf. Why, we have but just left thee.

Knute. Hours ago, surely : but come, don your cloaks, and lend me one ; and walk out with me—I have to speak with you.

The cloaks were fetched—put on—and the three warriors walked together some way in silence ; only interrupted by the challenges of the sentinels, to which Ulf replied, as the King seemed wrapped in meditation.—They passed the outposts, and still proceeded onward slowly and in silence, when Ulf thought it prudent to ask ;—“ Whither are we going, Knute ? —we are beyond our own camp.”

Knute. A little farther.

Silence followed ; and they continued walk-

ing away from the Danish encampment; when Ulf again broke in;—"We had better turn back we shall be upon the foeman straight."

Knute. Stay—I would speak with you first.

But though he said *Stay*, he continued walking; in a minute though he resumed his speech, and said—"If I should fall to morrow, friends,—and I feel a foreboding that I shall—"

Ulf tried to laugh, but failed: and so he said instead—"Nay, brother, talk not thus—think not thus—it is unlike thee."

Knute. Listen to me, Ulf—I say lest I should fall, I have one or two things to ask of thee, beforehand. I need not beg of thee to love and foster my poor sister; thou wilt do so for her own sake.

Ulf. I will, brother, indeed I will—but—hark! we are close upon the English leaguer—I heard their watch give the word—back, for the love of life: we are all without weapons.

Knute. No—A few steps further,—round

by this spinney—there can be no risk there:—
I will whisper too.

He paused a moment, and then continued;—
“Take heed of the Seaxon lady also—or
rather, Gudin, do thou that: ye have known
one another formerly, she tells me; take heed
of her if I die; and entreat her not the less
kindly, that she has loved King Knute.—One
thing more, Gudin, I think thou lovest Goda—
nay, I have seen it.. .”

Ulf could not quite keep down the ‘Oho!’
which rose to his lips, expressive quite as much
of self-approbation at a secret guess of his own,
as of astonishment at the discovery of the
fact: the King did not hear his ejaculation,
but proceeded—“And, Ulf, I think thy
sister loveth Gudin—nay, I may dare say, I
know it.”

Godwin cried out “Me?”

And Ulf said “Umph!” at this announce-
ment—astonishment being the cause of both
these exclamations—unmingled in Ulf’s case
by any of his former self-conceitedness:—God-
win’s feelings on the occasion may, I presume,
be readily imagined.

The King continued, "I would wish—indeed I pray,—that in case I die to-morrow, they may be made—"

"How now!—stand!—who goes there?" cried a Saxon sentinel starting out from the covert of the wood close beside them.

Godwin promptly answered, — "Friends. Eadmond and Eangland!"—for his quick ear had caught the watch-word, uttered in his native tongue, which Ulf had only indistinctly heard.

"Friends!—so!" observed the sentry, "I wonder much what brought you out here."

Godwin made no reply; but Ulf said in a low voice to the King, "Better go back at once—as though we had come to the wrong post: Gudín can unfold that."

Knute answered in a louder tone "Nay,—a little further on—just to see what may be seen—as we are so far safe."

"What's that?" cried the sentinel, "stand back! that is no Seaxon tongue: ho! fellows! up and hither!"

Godwin started forward—grappled the soldier by the throat, and flung him on the ground falling upon him, so as to keep his hold:—

“That is a Seaxon *gripe* at least,” he cried,—
“Now,—away—my Lord and Ulf—I will hold
the man here till ye are safe.”

Ulf. Stab him at once—with his own dagger.

Godw. No!—no! not yet, at least;—he
cannot harm us now; I will take heed he
shall not away!

Knute. We go not without thee, Gudín—
come with us.

Godw. I run little or no risk—my name will
save me—but away with you. I hear some of
them coming, I fear:—think what your being
taken would be to your friends yonder.

Ulf. True; come brother: and follow thou,
Gudín, as soon as may be.

Godwin watched them out of sight, and then
stooping to the man, said—“Swear thou wilt
not betray us, and I will leave thee safe.”

The man made a desperate struggle, but
Godwin tightened his grasp on his throat, and
added, “No—I loose thee not, till thou hast
sworn.”

It then occurred to him that as he was
strangling the man, it might be difficult for
him to speak at the moment—so something

relaxing his grasp, he said to him, "Wilt thou swear not to betray us."

"I will," gasped out the man.

Godw. By the holy gospel.

"By the holy gospel."

"I trust thee," said Godwin; and letting the man go, he sprang to his feet, and followed his friends at full speed.

"More fool thou!" roared the soldier leaping up also, and seizing his cross-bow, a bolt from which he sent whizzing after Godwin, at the same time adding,—*"Thou shouldst have asked first, whether I were christened."*

The bolt cut through the flesh of Godwin's shoulder, and pained him sharply, but he did not relax in his speed; nor was there much reason why he should, as he plainly heard the Seaxon sentinel summoning his comrades, and from their shouts guessed that they were already in pursuit after him: Godwin accordingly shouted to his friends lest he should go astray, and miss the Danish camp: the shout was returned; Knute insisted on waiting till he came up with them; and when he did, the all three set off racing, and stopped not till they

were safe within the out-posts of their camp. A volley of quarries was sent after them, but they all fell far short of their mark, for the Saxon pursuers had shot them more in disappointment, than with any other aim, as they had not thought it prudent to venture within bow-shot of the enemy.

As soon as they were quite safe, Knute flung himself upon the grass, and fell a laughing, while Ulf stood by looking unusually serious and sentimental.

Knute, through the peals of his laughter—said to him.

“ Well! ha! ha! ha!—I know it was—ha! ha! I know it was a mad business—but—ha! ha! thou needest not—ha! ha! Thou needest not look so woundy grave over it, Ulf—ha! ha! ha! nor shake thy head so wonderous wisely—ha!—ha!—at least it has driven away my gloominess, ha!—ha!—ha!—I’ll swear if I die not to-night of laughing, ha!—ha!—ha!—I never shall—at all!

Godw.—It was a great risk though, my lord.

Knute.—So it was, Gudin—ha! ha!—so it

was Ulf—a right great risk—and we owe thee, young Seaxon—ha! ha! ha! what a great deal we *do* owe thee.—Well—let us be earnest:—I see you both are—and I see too that the eastern welkin is fleckering with the dawn.—He rose very haughtily—So now away to our tents, and don our harness: come to me as soon as ye are ready.—

As Ulf and Godwin were on the road to their tent, the latter thought it high time to mention his wound, which, though in the hurry of running, he had not much felt it, now pained him excessively.

Ulf learning it was only a flesh wound, did not at all commiserate him—but on the contrary, laughed and congratulated him on being fairly initiated into the comfortable mysteries of warfare.—

“I well mind me,” said he, “the first wound I ever got—it was at the storming of my father’s house, by some Norwegian Vikingri—I was much younger than thou at the time—it was an ugly gash, athwart the right breast—and it bled wastefully—and pained me sorely—but I was fighting under my father’s

eye—and I knew I had better bite my tongue off than make moan of pain to Sprakalegs ;— at length however, a dizziness came upon me, and I could not see where I smote—nor scarcely lift my arm to smite at all—my flesh all tingled so—and I just mind my father's turning to me, and saying—‘ Now ;—thou bleedest boy ? ’ —for the blood had oozed through my chain mail ;—and my answering—‘ Indeed, father ? ’ —and then I fell in a swoon.—Ha ! ha ! I often look at that scar now, and think of that day.

Godw. This place is plaguing sore though.—

Ulf. I dare say it is—but 'tis quite a trifle for all that : but come, here we are—and now thou shalt have the choice of who shall play thy leech—thy friend's wife, or his sister—ah ! ha ! ha !—nay, never be ashamed of loving Ulf's sister, man.

Godw.—I am not ashamed of it, Ulf.—

Ulf. Why blush then ?

Godw. Blush men never but from shame ?—

Ulf. Oh ! hang me if I know—'tis a womanly trick, methinks, altogether :—and makes a man look womanfaced.

Without putting Godwin to the necessity of choosing, Ulf requested his sister to look after his wound, and she, as behoved a noble lady of those days, cheerfully undertook the duty: it was found that the wound was, in fact, but trifling, but that the broad head of the arrow had driven in part of the coarse stuff of which his mantle was made; it was the chafing of this, that had caused him so much annoyance; it was soon removed, and a healing salve applied; he felt perfectly relieved, and enabled, without any inconvenience, to bear the weight of his armour.

As soon as he was accoutred, having returned his thanks—which, if their heartiness should have been judged by their fluency of utterance, were not very hearty;—he proceeded with his friend to the royal tent. The King was already armed, and in a more than usual sumptuous suit; and holding conference with several of his chieftains. Each having received his instructions, they one by one departed; and Knute with his immediate attendants, sallied out of his tent, to mount the noble

courser, which stood impatiently pawing at the entrance.

To Ulf, who stood by his side, as he mounted, he said—"I have not been able to get over my bodings, though — and therefore I have donned this gear—that at least I may fall like a King."

Ulf said "Pooh!"—and Knute only frowned, and bit his lip—but that little sarcastic "Pooh!" had a strong effect upon him—and quite soured the sweetness of his precious temper.—Had Ulf said "Pooh!" now when the King first mentioned his presentiment—ten to one the effect would have been that he had been ashamed of the weakness, and the first to laugh at himself;—but Ulf then took the affair seriously—and so of course did Knute :—but now that this presentiment had taken—so to say—a visible shape—; now that, under its influence, he had committed an overt act of rebellion against the supremacy of sound sense, he could not bear to be ridiculed—or to fancy that he was—so stuck his spurs into his horse—checked him at the same mo-

ment—and then gave the reins to the rearing beast, who galloped off at a speed that defied all competition.

Ulf, Godwin, and other chieftains followed as soon as they could mount—but though they used their utmost haste, they did not get up with the King till he had just finished an harangue to the soldiers; the loss of which was probably of some consequence to them—though the reader might find it troublesome to have it repeated.

The Danish army now moved on, and soon came in sight of the English marching forward to meet them. Already the two hostile bodies had halted within bow-shot of each other—already their bows were at their shoulders, waiting the signal to be discharged—when a small body of horsemen were perceived galloping at a furious rate from an adjoining hill.

The leader, who rode some yards in advance of the others, was distinguishable by a long white mantle and plume, both which streamed behind him in the wind, as he rode most rapidly on—shouting as he came, and waving his armed hand over his head.—

Both armies paused, wondering what this could mean—their leaders gave the signal to lower their weapons: as soon as this was done the horseman reined in, so that his followers might come up with him; two of whom he despatched as messengers, one to each of the adverse armies.—

The message was, a request that either party would suspend their hostile operations for the space of but half an hour, and draw near, and listen to the words of one, who was willing to serve both Kings.—

A short consultation took place in either army, between the monarchs and their chieftains: before the Danes had come to any conclusion, a herald arrived from Edmund to enquire whether Knute was willing to accede to the proposition of the stranger, as the English were so; and the Danish King immediately gave orders for his men to march forward with their arms reversed.—The English followed their example, without waiting for the return of their herald.

Meantime, the horseman, with whom this arrangement had originated, had ridden alone

to the top of a small knoll, which stood about midway between the two powers. To this spot, therefore, both the English and the Danes directed their steps—but no sooner were the former near enough to distinguish the features of the horseman, than they set up an unanimous and deafening shout of “The Betrayer! the Betrayer!” and the bowmen all levelled their weapons against him.

The rider merely stood up in his stirrups, and raised his right arm and open hand erect—as though to awe the Saxons into quiet—and his bold and uncompromising demeanour, had its desired effect; the Saxons paused; but the Danes, who had misunderstood both their shout, and the object of their aim—answered the former with as loud a one—and levelling their bows against their enemies, several random arrows were discharged, before order could be restored.

Owing to the active exertions of Edmond and his officers, the volley was not returned: and Knute, doubly enraged, that *his* men alone should have committed a breach of discipline,

rode angrily along his ranks, and demanded who it was that had shot the first shot.

“We thought they were about to shoot at us, King;”—said a sturdy yeoman, who stood the last of one of the wings.—

“Who bade him either think—or do?” roared out the infuriated monarch.—“This to teach him better.”

He raised his heavy mace—the man neither drew back nor quailed—the weapon fell down upon his head—and he dropped flat forward on the earth.—

Another man, who had stood next the fallen one, stepped forward and said—“My brother shot no shot, King;—I did—though not the first.

“What!” cried out Knute—“why said’st not so before? the blow should have been thine—and such another—by—” he checked himself in the whirl he was giving to his weapon, and added—“But no—one lesson shall be enough.”

He then rode back sullenly to his station, and seeing that the English were again march-

ing forward, gave orders for his men to do the same.

The two armies formed, in two segments of a circle, round the mount; near enough to be within hearing of the rider, Godwin, who before had not recognized him, now said to Knute—"It is Edric Streona, my lord."

"Thinkest thou I ne'er saw Edric Streona before?" was the answer; at which Godwin bowed, and Ulf shrugged his shoulders.

Edric, so soon as he saw tranquillity established among his numerous audience, addressed them as follows—first turning to his own countrymen:—

"Why seek ye my life?—why blame ye me?—Doom me not hastily—or ye will doom me wrongfully—deem not ill of me, for that I have done all I could, to stay the evils that were harrying our poor land: I have but done, what meseemed best—if the end have not turned out good, blame not me therefore—I would have ended this wasting war: I would do so now. Hear me then, O kings, even though ye heed not my words, yet hear them.

We have, most worthy leaders, fought long enough against one another ; there hath been but too much blood shed between both the folk ; and the manhood of the war-men on both sides is enough seen by trial ; as well as that of both yourselves likewise ; and yet can ye bear neither good nor evil luck. If one of you win the fight, he followeth him that is overcome ; and if he chance to be worsted, he resteth not till he have acquired new strength to fight eftsoons with him that is the overcomer. What should ye mean by this your untamable hardihood ? At what mark shooteth your greedy lust to bear rule, and your too great thirst to gain a name ? If ye fight for a kingdom, deal this between you two, which while-ome was enough for seven kings : but if ye covet to win a name and great praise, and for the same are driven to try the risk whether ye shall wield or yield the sway ; find out a way, whereby ye may without so great slaughter, and without such sad bloodshed of both your guiltless folk, try whether of you is more worthy to be raised."

This speech was received with acclamations

from both hosts—and Edmond Ironside, spurring his horse a few yards forward, waved his hand over his head, and cried in a tone, which was heard plainly above the shouts of the two armies—"I am ready!"

Knute did not exhibit so much alacrity upon the occasion—for, though no coward, he certainly would rather have avoided a single conflict with Edmond, whose gigantic stature and strength gave him a tremendous advantage over any adversary whom he might encounter. Some months back, when Edmond had proposed to put the issue of the warfare on the chance of a single combat between them, Knute had coolly replied—"Let him who talks of fighting in winter, take heed to be ready in summer:" at present however there was no such chance of evading the proposed contest—the proposition had been made in the face and in the hearing of both armies—had been joyfully and clamorously acknowledged by them—had been immediately accepted by Edmond; whose bold and fearless bearing had gained him a continuance of the applauding shouts, even from his enemies.

All this passed with the rapidity of thought through Knute's mind; and the result of his quick deliberation was a resolution to accept the challenge, at all risks; but lest the scarcely momentary delay, occasioned by this reflection, might be supposed to originate in fear or hesitation, he also resolved to join battle with the Saxon upon the instant.

He called Godwin therefore to his side, and said to him—"Go—say to yonder braggart, I *will* meet him—on horse—sword in hand—and man to man, alone—within the half hour—on yonder aight: bear him these tidings, and the defiance of Knute Sweinson, King of half the north."

Godwin, accompanied by a herald, took and delivered the message, omitting indeed, as matter of surplusage, the honorable title, which the Danish monarch, in his courtesy, had bestowed upon his foe.

Edmund received Godwin kindly—heard the message, and replied calmly—" 'Tis well—I shall wait on the King of half the north—and nearly of half our Engelland, good sooth," (he added with a scornful smile)—"to judge

by the many English that follow him :— his host is indeed rife with betrayers, I wis” — (he proceeded in a sterner tone) — “that he could find a Seaxan so readily to come on such an errand—go back, young man.”

Godwin blushed—and did as he was bidden—and gave Edmund’s answer to Knute in a trembling voice—and with flushed face and fiery eye—this little taunt of his natural lord’s had done more to make him feel enmity and hatred towards the English, than all his father’s arguments and commands—backed even by the stronger influence—though he would not have acknowledged it to have been so, of Goda’s beauty.

The two armies now separated. Edric ranged with neither ; but retired with his few followers, as he had come, at a hard gallop.

It might not be difficult to assign a probable cause for the apparently patriotic advice which this eminent traitor had just given ; advice which seemed so admirably calculated to terminate the frightful horrors, with which this unhappy land had been for so long a period

afflicted. For it did indeed seem most just that those who had set the devastating machine of war at work, should be called upon at their personal peril, to put a stop to the further progress of the mischief: and it was evident that in the case of the death or submission of either king, the war would necessarily be at end—as the main-spring of the evil—the emulation of ambition—would be annihilated. But a deeper and more self-interested motive may without much injustice be attributed to Edric on this occasion: he was himself an ambitious man—and in the hope of furthering his own aspiring views, he had first turned traitor to his too trusting king, and by counsel—money—and men, had aided the Danes in their successful attempts against him:—for he calculated that Swein's gratitude would raise him to a higher pitch of importance, than he ever hoped of attaining under the reign of Ethelred—to whom he could by his loyalty render by no means such efficient services, as by his disloyalty he could to the Danish invader. He perceived also that so long as England was thus invaded by a brave and pertinacious enemy, there was

no chance for the establishment of that tranquillity, which was indispensable for the settlement of his own power—even could he have been content with what he was likely to obtain under an English king :—he saw also a further impediment to his projects of ambition, in the disunion which prevailed throughout the country, between those chieftains and their numerous retainers, on whom she relied for support :—continually mistrusting and betraying one another, they lived in a state of civil warfare ; and Edric was aware that one half the nation were ready to join the standard of any foreign enemy were it only that they might be enabled to wreak their feud against their domestic foes. Edric had therefore willingly and powerfully assisted both Swein and his son Knute in their attempts to conquer England—for the most part he had done so covertly—and yet often openly—in the latter case trusting, and always successfully, to the fondness and imbecility of Ethelred for the means of purchasing his pardon and confidence, either by false exculpation, or feigned repentance : but when, at the death of this king, aptly surnamed the Unready, his natural

son Edmund stepped into the seat of power, and seized the slackened reins of government with a strong and resolute hand, Edric saw that he had now an additional difficulty to compete with—and that he was matched with one, whose genius was equal to his own cunning, and whose bravery bid fair to frustrate all his complicated schemes. At the battle of Searstan, he had adopted the desperate experiment, (before alluded to,) of cutting off the head of one Osmear, a man, who bore some small resemblance to the English monarch, and raising it aloft, crying to the Saxons to flee—for ‘there was the head of Edmund!’—on that occasion he had but narrowly escaped the avenging spear of the indignant King: he had been received afterwards, it is true, upon his solemn oath that he had himself been mistaken, into pardon and partial favour—but coldly and unconfidentially—and he had but awaited a more propitious opportunity of completing his long career of treachery. At Assandun, he had fled with his division—in the hopes, that by thus subtracting a large portion from the English army, they would be defeated. They were

so, it is true, but yet not so wholly as he had expected. He had subsequently sent message after message to Edmund, in order to explain his conduct on that occasion—but in vain—the English king refused to listen to them, and at length swore upon the holy gospels that he would behead the next messenger who should come from Edric. Still the game was not played out—and after revolving the affair deliberately and calmly he adopted the expedient just narrated : he argued with himself—if in a single battle Edmund should be slain, he might confidently calculate on the gratitude of Knute ; if on the other hand, Edmund should be the victor, he should be enabled to go before him with an appeal to the consequences of his advice, as the best answer to the charge of treachery or disloyalty : and if both should fall, as his eager wish led him to hope, then the very highest desire of his ambition would be within his reach, and he would daringly, and fearlessly himself ascend the vacant throne, and endeavour, by the boldness and decision of this act—if he could not unite all parties in allegiance—at least to terrify them

into submission. As far as it had gone, his device had answered to his most sanguine expectations; and he now anxiously and not without some fear awaited its issue.

Meanwhile Knute, attended by a few chieftains, and his favourite mare, had been ferried over to the spot appointed for the battle—an aight or islet of the name of Olney, situated about midway in the stream of the Severn—on one side of the island grew a thick fringe of osiers—otherwise it was bare of trees and shrubs, and covered with (considering its damp situation) a singularly short and smooth sward. The osiers by Knute's direction were all felled—he himself assisting cheerfully in the operation—‘For,’ he observed, ‘it would be too bad if Seaxons on the other side should see all the sport—and his true Danes none on’t.’

As soon as this was finished—he desired to be left alone; retaining Ulf, a few moments after the rest had departed, in a secret conference, the particulars of which have never been yet revealed—nor shall they be now—thus much however may be told, that when Knute shook

hands with Ulf, on the edge of the island, as the latter was stepping into the ferry-boat, the former was by all present, distinctly heard to pronounce the words—"Farewell, brother."

Knute did not long wait alone upon the island, for before his friends had reached the one shore—a rudely constructed raft, had put off from the other, bearing Edmond, his horse, and several Saxon officers.

Knute's first feeling was that of suspicion of treachery—nor was the feeling confined to him alone—for Ulf, when he saw the laden raft, which he had not done at first, owing to the intervening aiglet, ordered the ferry-boat to be steered round—and to be rowed back as quickly as could be to the island:—but Knute, by one of those wonderful inconsistencies of our nature, which as often amuse, as they annoy us, as soon as he perceived that his own suspicious fears were shared by others—grew ashamed of them—and waving his hand to Ulf, he cried—"Back! back! I will meet them"—and then led his steed slowly and proudly towards the raft.

Edmund, who in this action, and the movement of the Danes, read their doubts, in order at once to remove them, hastily mounted his horse, and then spurred the restive animal, who sprang upon the island, spurning the raft with his hoofs, and sending it spinning down the stream. The Danish king, a little astonished at the feat, stopped—deliberately mounted, and waited till Edmund came up within a few yards of him, when Edmund also drew up: they both bowed, but spoke not—and remained for some minutes, sitting and intently scrutinizing each other.

In dress, bearing, and general appearance the two Kings, certainly presented a striking contrast. Knute, mounted on a bright bay mare, richly caparisoned—her head-stall and bridle adorned with precious stones—was clad in a most sumptuous suit of chain-mail, the meshes of which were alternately of dead gold and bright steel—his helmet of the latter metal, but inlaid with sprigs of dead gold, and fastened under the chin, by a broad band of similar chain mail, was surmounted by a plume of black feathers—and in his hand

he bore his naked sword—the scabbard of which he had sent back by Ulf.—Edmund on the other hand sat on a heavy grey stallion, whose accoutrements were utterly without ornament—he wore the same suit of half-rusty mail in which he has been before seen, and the same plumeless and dinted casque on his head—his sword was still at rest in its sheath : stern, severe, determined,—he looked like Mars himself ; while his adversary, (to borrow another simile from the same old mythology,) bore rather the aspect of one of the milder Deities of Olympus—Apollo or Mercury—who had descended from his celestial seat to put on the unwonted but easily assumed habiliments of combat.

The two armies had arranged themselves on each side of the river in anxious and almost breathless expectation, watching every movement of their leaders, on the conflict between whom such important results depended :—at some distance off on a rising ground, which by the windings of the stream also faced the island, was stationed a large body of horsemen—this was Edric, and the whole of his division, that had fled from Assandun ; he had chosen that

spot, as commanding a tolerably good view of the scene of combat, and yet being sufficiently far removed from either army; to neither of whom, he felt it, just at that time, quite prudent to entrust himself.

After the two Kings had for some moments eyed one another in silence, as though each was measuring his antagonist's strength, and speculating where his own blows would be likely to tell the most effectually—Knut^e put in motion his steed, who had showed considerably more impatience than his master, by pawing and tossing his head—and slowly, but still at the same distance, rode round the English King: Edmund, who, as soon as Knute began to move, had drawn his sword, as slowly turned his horse round, so as still to face his enemy—and at length, as if weary of this delay, he said in a calm, though loud voice —“ Come on—*I* am ready.”

The repetition of these words—and the peculiar emphasis which Edmund laid on that one little monosyllable, so thoroughly raised all Knute's spirit, that without waiting to complete his circuit—without even considering the disadvantage of the rising ground which was now

between him and Edmund—he reined his horse back—even till his hind hoofs splashed among the sedges at the island’s brink—and then urging him forward with spur and voice, with uplifted sword darted full speed at his foe: Edmund sat quietly still to receive him, raising his own sword diagonally above his head, so as most effectually to ward off the threatened blow—but as Knute came up with him, he suddenly changed his method of attack, and struck Edmund, under his sword, a heavy blow on the left side of his neck—the English King just tottered in his seat—just enough for it to be perceived by the lookers-on—and from the Danish army a shout of exultation was raised, to congratulate their leader on having given the first and so good a blow: but before the sound of that shout could reach the ears of the combatants, Edmund had revenged himself for that blow, with a back stroke of his sword; which Knute just escaped by crouching forward, but which carried off his plume and the golden ornament that held it.

“A pretty shittle-cock;” said Edmund, as he quietly turned his horse round, so as to

oppose Knute again—the latter also turned, and again spurred forward to the charge—and this time Edmund came at full speed to meet him.

And now, indeed, the combat became real and desperate—their weapons rose and fell, with the flash and rapidity of lightning—their armour rattled like hail, under the heavy and quick blows:—now they close in with one another so near, that they cannot strike with their swords—now they are too far apart for their blows to tell:—their horses even seem animated with the hostile fury of their riders—they rear—they neigh—they strike out at one another with their paws—they bite each other on the breast and shoulders, till they draw blood:—blood also—if it does not yet stain the brightness of either fighter's sword,—is weltering through the links of their mail, which in many parts has been crashed through, by the sheer force of the adversary's sword:—Edmund now aims a furious plunge at Knute—the latter beats down the blade—it enters deep into the breast of his mare, who rears under the pain so madly and suddenly, that

her rider is nearly thrown off backwards—and the infixed weapon—not without dreadfully lacerating the poor beast—is wrenched out of Edmund's hand—the mare recovers herself, and plunges down again with such force, that Knute is thrown upon Edmund—they grapple—the mare falls—and drags to the earth after her both the combatants—Edmund's steed gallops off—plunges into the stream—and is drowned.

The kings rise from their all but mortal struggle on the ground—Knute had dropped his sword in the fall—and Edmund seizes it—Knute plucks his foe's from the still gasping breast of his mare—wards off a furious blow of the Saxon's—then cries—"Stay!"—and plunges the blade into the suffering beast's heart.—

A short pause ensued—the combat was then resumed, but not with the same ardour as before—neither of the combatants could well manage his new weapon—Knute's was too heavy for him—Edmund's too light—their arms ached with the exertion—they were both weary—and even faint from loss of blood—they

fought on however, for another hour — neither gaining any decided advantage over the other — and at the end of that period, they simultaneously paused — and rested on their swords, within arm's length of each other.

The shouts and cries of encouragement or fear, which had all along accompanied the blows of the two champions — waxing or waning in loudness, according to the increased or diminished interest of the conflict, were now hushed down into silence, or at most an anxious murmur, as the excitement of the scene had stopped, and suspense again became predominant. — How great must have been the astonishment of both armies, when after a protracted pause of several minutes, they saw their leaders approach still nearer — fling away their swords — and grasp each other's hand. — While yet this sense of astonishment chained the lips of the spectator with silence; Edric at once guessing what had led to this unexpected termination of the duel, turned round, and fled with his host.

Then the murmur of surprise gradually rose and ran along the ranks, till it swelled into an exclamation of joy, and 'The war is over!' 'The kings are friends!' 'Long live Edmond

and Knout he!' 'Long live Knute and Eadmond! —high! high!' resounded on either side. Ulf, Godwin, Haco, and some other chieftains put off in a boat towards the island, at the signal of Knute; and some of the Seaxon leaders did the same at that of Edmond.

While they are crossing the river, it may not be amiss to revert to the two Kings, from whose company the reader has been somewhat unceremoniously, and perhaps unaccountably, hurried away: but it shall be accounted for; for I hate all unnecessary mystery—and myself, not knowing much of art, utterly denegate the validity of the old established rule, about *ars est celare artem*, and therefore I candidly confess that the transition *was* made for the sake of effect.

The fact is then, that Knute had began to suspect he should not be able to come up to time—and that if Edmond should not be in the same condition, he himself should stand a very good chance of being worsted: after he had taken as much breath as he could get therefore he had addressed the Saxon King thus;—“What need ought thus to stir us, most worthy king, that for the gaining of a kingdom,

we should thus put our lives at risk? Better were it, that laying weapons and ill-will aside, we should stoop to some fair understanding. Let us become sworn brethren, and deal the kingdom betwixt us: that henceforth we may be such friends as thou mayest use my things as thine—and I thine as mine.”

Whether Edmond participated in Knute’s doubt as to the event of the combat cannot be correctly stated, as there is no record of that fact; but he was evidently pleased and pacified at the proposal, for he flung away his sword—Knute did the same, and they joined hands together, as before mentioned; Edmond saying at the time, “I like thy rede so well, that I even thus greet thee, my brother Knute.”

On the arrival of the chieftains the terms of the reconciliation were shortly explained, while the leeches stripped the monarchs of their armour, and applied healing salves to their wounds: they were then reclad in softer garments; cloaks having been spread, they lay themselves on them, while the thanes of both nations (the little isle by this time being crowded with them) stood around to listen or

advise.—With perhaps a somewhat unseemingly hastiness,—affording at any rate a curious contrast to the decent dilatoriness that pervades our modern treaties, be they on ever so trifling a subject,—the stipulations of the peace were drawn up, committed to writing by the clerks, and signed with a cross by both monarchs, and most of the nobles and ecclesiastics who were present. By this pacification it was agreed that the kingdom should be divided between the two Kings :—That the Thames should be the line of division :—that all the territory to the south of that river, together with Middlesex, should be retained by Edmond; while the rest to the north—(a much larger share by the way, though as shrewd politicians of the day observed, a much less cultivated and valuable portion)—was allotted to Knute, it was settled also that a large sum should be paid by Edmund in order to enable the Dane to discharge his army.—The kings embraced each other, as did also most of the thanes, and they then interchanged oaths that they would abide by the terms of the treaty. The oath taken by Eadmond and the Saxons was “By God’s holy spell.” The

Danes swore, each by his father's head, or sword. Knute, to make all sure, swore both oaths ; he had been baptized, by the name of Lambert, when an infant ; so that he thought it proper to take the same oath that other Christians did ; but as in reality he knew little or nothing of the divine mysteries of that religion, having been bred among camps and heathens ; he like an honest and conscientious infidel, (if such a thing may be,) swore an oath which he believed would be binding on him : and so both parties were satisfied, and most especially the pious Wulfgar, the Abbot of Abbandune, or Abingdon, (as we perversely call it,) who, after several persevering exhortations, wrung from Knute a further oath (of rather an equivocal nature) that he would duly and quickly attend to those solemn doctrines, to which he had been re-born by baptism—and a free and unqualified permission to convert as many of his heathen followers as he might be able.

Knute, in the politest phrases of the day, requested the pleasure of Edmond's company for a few days in his new capital of Gloucester ;

but Eadmond, quite as politely, though very peremptorily, declined 'his brother's' exceedingly civil invitation, urging the necessity of his immediate attendance at his old capital of London.

And so the kings separated; and Eadmond with his army departed.

Just as Knute landed on the banks of the Severn, near Deerhurst; while the acclamations of the soldiery were ringing around, (for without understanding any thing about the matter, they were thoroughly convinced that their leader had achieved a great triumph of some sort or other) a dead body was carried by, and the king, being in an inquiring mood, asked;—"Ha! has there been slaughter done here?—how is this?"

Most of the thanes looked exceedingly sheepish at this question, as though it somehow implicated their honour or veracity, but none answered; this of course made Knute angry, and he repeated his question.

"How is this, I say? has slaughter been done here?"

Ulf stepped forward, and answered "Aye."

Knute. By whom?

Ulf. By him, who when he did it, was not King of half Eangland.

Knute. Ah!—I remember.

He walked slowly on and said no more; till Godwin, in order to say something congratulatory, took the liberty of observing that the King's foreboding had not been fulfilled.

Ulf answered, "Nay, but it has: the King foreboded he should fall to-day,—and has he not had a mighty fall,—from his horse?"

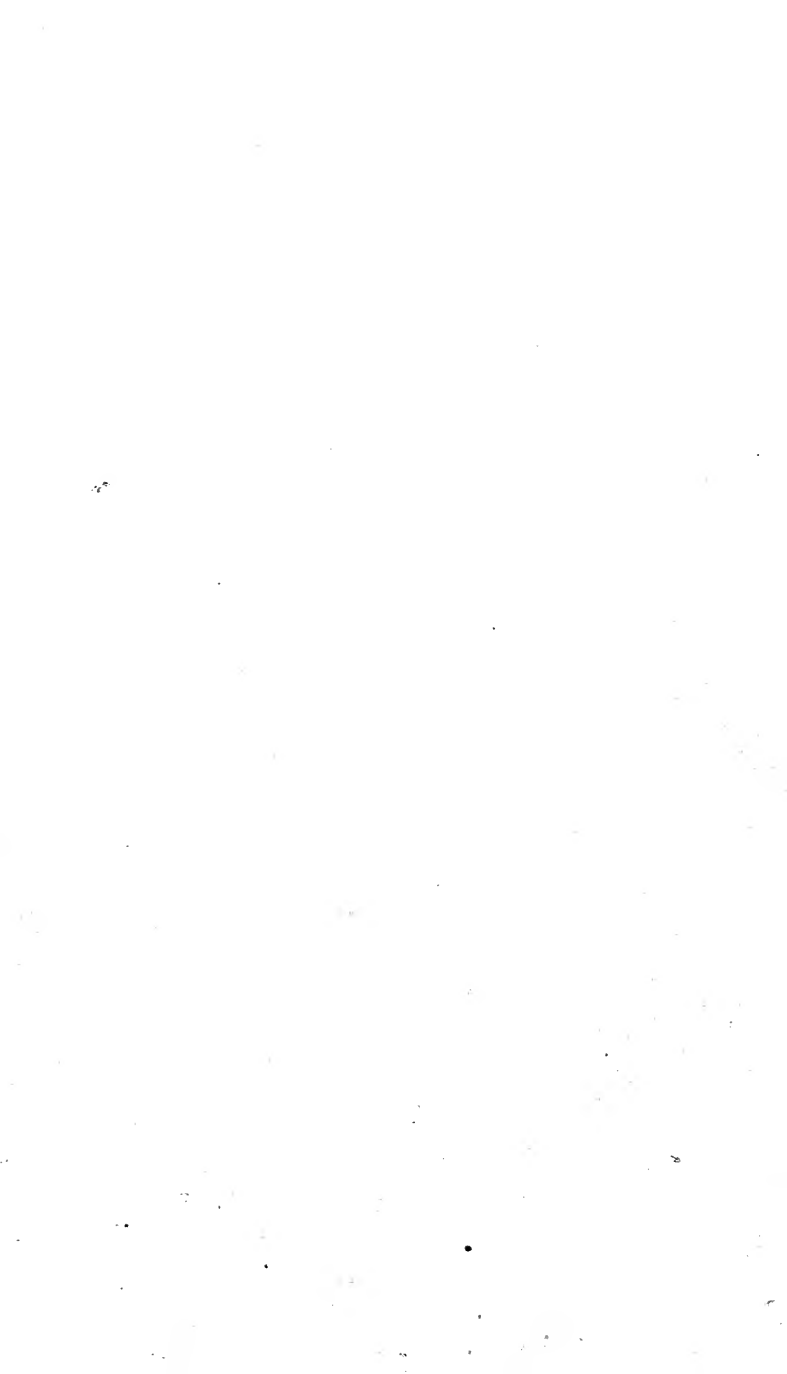
To which Knute replied, "The King shall yet have a much more lowly fall than that, before night, brother Ulf."

And even Ulf wondered at this strange speech.

END OF VOL. I.

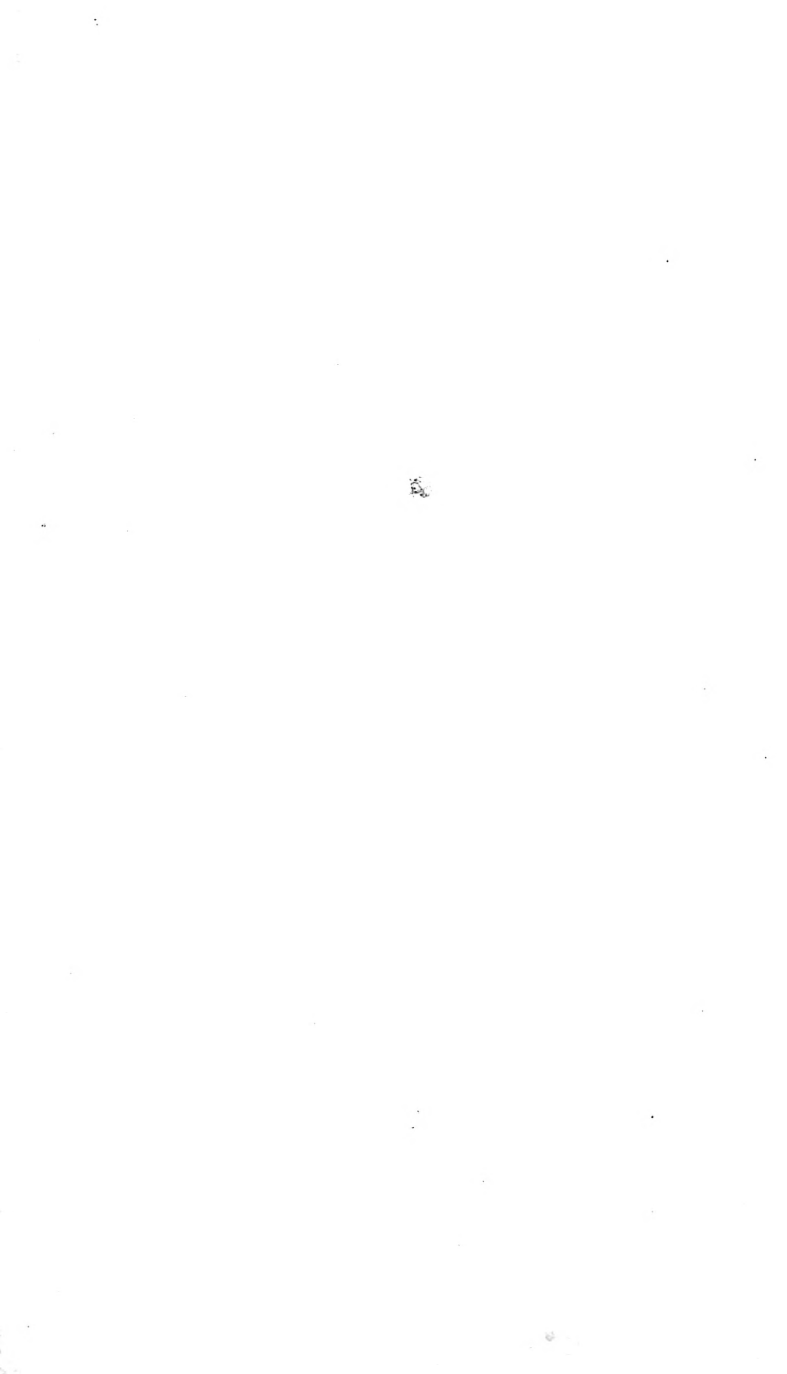
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